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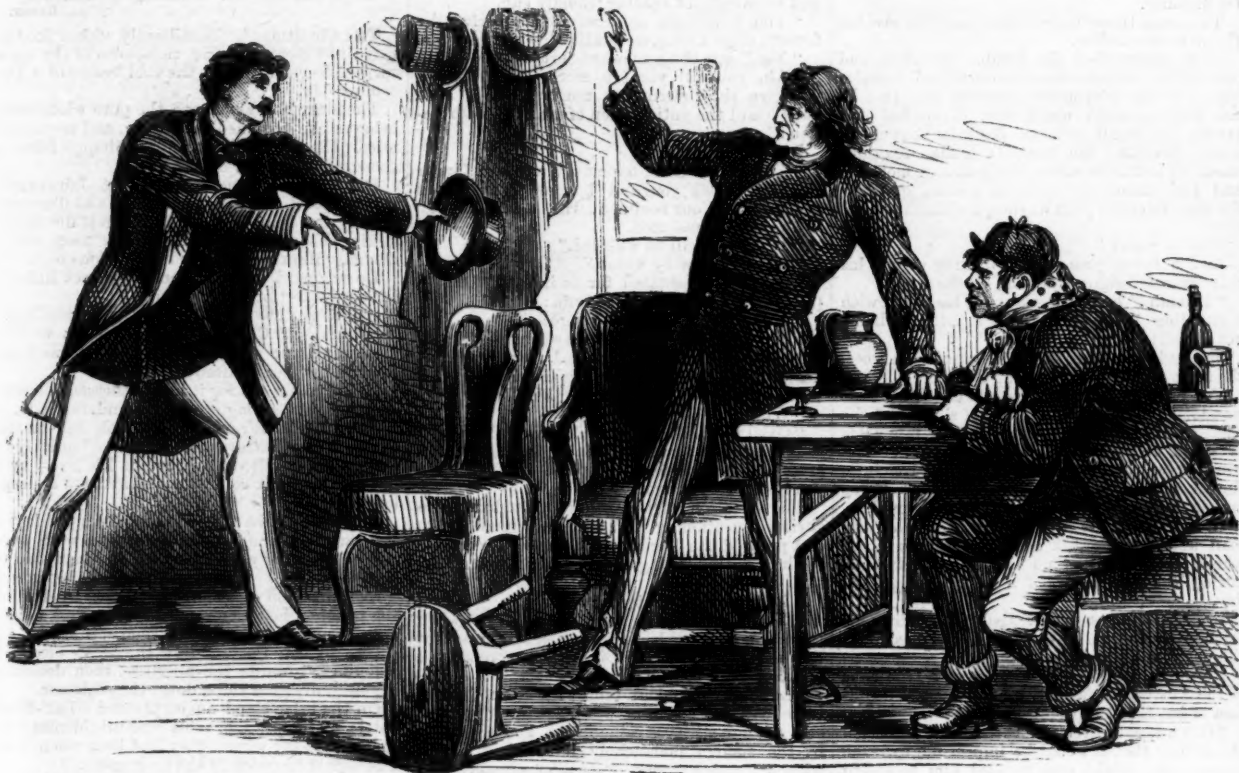
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[REGISTERED FOR TRANSMISSION ABROAD.]

No. 765—VOL. XXX.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING DECEMBER 29, 1877.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[IN SEARCH OF A FATHER.]

SNOWFLAKES' SHADOW, SUNBEAMS' SHINE.

A CHRISTMAS STORY OF TWO WORLDS.

CHAPTER III.

What's'er I be,
Words wild as these, accusers like to thee,
I list no further. BYRON.

Long after the officers and their captive had departed Charlotte Ducie, refusing even the sweet companionship of her daughter, sat solitary in her own chamber, gazing out with hopeless eyes into the black night without, which so aptly typified the darkness of her own soul.

"No," she said to herself, in utter despair, "this blow is crushing. For this terrible ill there is no earthly remedy. My husband, my daughter, my son!"—even to herself she hardly dared to speak the word—"and myself alike blighted for ever! Oh, Gaston, Gaston, you are indeed avenged!"

But the blackness of the outer night itself might have suggested consolation to Mrs. Ducie's wrung heart, for not only must the old inevitable law of nature bring the morrow's sunshine but even as she sat that light shone brightly on millions of fellow creatures far away.

As with the world on which man dwells so of man himself. Those sunbeams which gild the lofty Andes leave for the time the icy peak of Ararat dark and drear, but as the great globe whirls on the snow-crown of the Armenian

mountain shall not lack in turn the genial lustre.

Darkness and light in succession are too the law of the heart, and if the first be borne bravely the second will in due time come with balm and brightness.

While over the great city, the snow-clad English fields and granges and ice-locked streams the shadow of night brooded, afar, with the width of the world between them, a wide Australian prairie lay green in the radiance of summer sunbeams. Far and wide as the eye could reach extended the monotonous expanse of waving grass. No little oasis of "scrub" or trees broke the horizon line east or west, north or south.

A horseman was ploughing his way with difficulty through the tall, stubborn grass, which as his jaded horse clove it parted right and left to the height of the rider's stirrup.

The man was evidently a soldier: his garb and the stout saddle-bags proclaimed him an orderly bound for the nearest town.

He was a person of middle age, tall and stalwart, sunburnt and seasoned, with a dark, handsome face, which, however, wore a subdued expression—this and the grey threads thickly sprinkled among his closely cut auburn hair giving the man somewhat of the appearance of premature old age.

As he strove to encourage the tired animal he bestrode the soldier raised his cap and wiped his forehead, looking up almost appealingly at the expanse of cloudless blue above him.

"I shall not reach my destination by night-fall," he muttered, "even if I be not lost, which I shrewdly suspect. It will be pleasant camping out here in this infernal grass on Christmas

Eve! Well, all places are the same to me this side the grave. But I hate to fail in duty. Courage, Trojan, my boy! We may do it yet. If I could but get water for thee I should not complain for myself."

On, on, across the dreariness of that unchanging savannah, still under that cloudless sky, while a hot breeze parched the mouth and nostrils of both man and beast.

Suddenly the wind fell, a strange, ominous calm succeeded, and a few dusky clouds rolled up from the south.

The soldier gazed at the sky with an experienced eye.

"A southerly buster, by Jove!" he ejaculated.

Then, slipping from the saddle, he secured his steed with some trouble by a picketing pin—the animal's hind-quarters towards the south—and threw himself full length in the tall grass.

A strange roar filled the air above the cowering horse, whose inclined ears and wildly rolling eyes indicated his terrors. High overhead rolled the gathering clouds in black battalions, while a blast of wind so scorching that respiration was almost impossible swept the grassy surface.

From the coiling, writhing, serpent-like masses of thin cloud vivid flashes of lightning now issued, while the glorious diapason of continuous thunder peals formed a magnificent bass to the sharp screech of the hurrying wind.

In a moment more the mass of thick cloud overhead was rent and a torrent of heavy rain fell on the travellers with terrific violence.

It was the duststorm or "brickfielder" of the Australian townsman.

Short as sharp, the heavy pall of clouds rolled on, followed by a rearguard of light-coloured vapour, then the sun shone out and the wet grass glistened gaily in the bright light.

The soldier arose, threw off his wet cloak and unpicked his charger.

"We're both the better for that shower, Trojan," he said. "We'll be on the route again."

On, on; but ere long the monotonous skyline was broken by a little dusky clump in the far distance.

The horse threw up his head, as if he saw too the welcome shelter.

They approached the scrub. Gum tree and eucalyptus, at first stunted and gradually attaining more fair proportions, greeted the eye. In the little swamps which now diversified the prairie the small crimson Banksia showed its lovely flowerets, the hard Australian foxglove shook its stiff bells with a rustle almost metallic, and last came the glorious acacia, greeting the nostrils of the tired wayfarers with its almond odour.

Still no water!

As the horse pressed on with new vigour his rider detected signs of human proximity.

"Hurrah!" he cried, slapping his thigh with a sounding thwack—"there's a settler's home not far off! Courage, Trojan!"

Suddenly emerging from a clump of gum trees, the settler met the soldier's eyes.

The pasture land rising from the flat prairie was dotted by the white fleeces of sheep and the variegated skins of abundant cattle; fair fields of grain opened out their wide expanse, and a winding watercourse led the eye to a romantic timber farmhouse, whose wide verandah was embowered in climbing roses and honeysuckles.

In a few seconds the water was gained and man and horse drank as only they can drink whose hard, dry lips no liquid has refreshed during the long hours of a sultry Antipodean day.

Ere the charger had ceased "distending his leathern sides with water," a man stepped from the porch and approached the orderly.

He was a tall, jolly-looking man, a true type of the Australian farmer, who is no bad imitation of his English prototype.

After a hearty greeting the settler informed the soldier that it would be impossible to reach his goal that night, and pressed him to accept lodgings and Christmas hospitality.

The soldier looked at his worn steed, shook his head doubtfully, and finished by accepting the proffer.

After seeing that his horse was well tended the soldier followed his host into the house.

The handsome chamber into which he was ushered held most of the comforts and some of the luxuries of an English home of a higher grade. Paintings of no mean merit adorned the walls, and a handsome piano stood in a recess.

The settler's family—a mild-faced, middle-aged woman, a fine young man, an excellent specimen of the Australian "cornstalk," and two beautiful girls of sixteen and fifteen—welcomed the soldier as heartily as the farmer had done.

The visitor did justice to the abundant viands which were set before him, and the time passed pleasantly.

As the evening closed in the piano was opened and the family individually and collectively joined in the old tunes which, sung around the domestic hearth on the Eve of the Redemption day, shall never fail to gladden the heart of the Englishman, or perchance bring sad tears into eyes all unaccustomed to weep.

At first the soldier had joined in the familiar strains in a fine, resonant baritone voice. But after awhile he composed himself to listen as a Christmas carol was sung by the girls in their soft, bird-like tones.

As the music went on the soldier leant his head upon his hand as he sat by the table. It dropped lower and lower, and a strange sound smote very faintly on the ear of the jovial host. He gazed curiously on the grey-sprinkled head bowed down so quietly.

As the strain ceased the soldier raised his face. It was strangely moved.

A quick gleam of intelligence shot over the sunburnt features of the farmer, and his lips involuntarily compressed themselves for a soft—"Phew!"

Noting the dark hazel eyes of his guest turn upon him, the Australian instantly suppressed all indications of surprise.

The pleasant evening was at last ended and the family retired to rest, but the farmer and his guest still remained to smoke a parting pipe and to partake of another friendly cup.

"You have seen some service?" queried the farmer, after a long, meditative draw at his pipe.

"Yes," was the somewhat curt reply.

"Ah, you will yet see more. The Maories will give the government much trouble. You have heard the anticipation of a native insurrection?"

The soldier nodded.

"You'll find them opponents worthy of your steel I can tell you, and I know something of the Maori. Your regiment will be called out?"

The soldier assented.

"Well, you will be well led."

"Do you know by whom?"

The farmer hesitated for an instant, then replied, in slow, measured accents:

"Major Ducie—who exchanges—"

The orderly sprang from his seat in uncontrollable excitement. His bronzed face paled beneath the surface colouring, his dark eyes glared with an almost insane lustre.

"What?"

"Calm yourself, my man. Why should you be so excited?—or rather"—and the Australian arose and stood facing his guest—"why should you not, for—you are Horace Mowbray!"

The agitation of the soldier subsided into a curious, questioning look as he advanced a step and perused the features of his entertainer.

Then, with a strong effort at self-command, he said, coldly:

"I don't know what you mean."

"Yes, you do. You know of a man who when the name of a noble, true gentleman was but now mentioned felt the ire which scorched the heart of Cain burn hot in his breast?"

The soldier gazed at him with stern, inscrutable eyes, but spoke no word.

A strange stillness came in the house, broken by the sudden melancholy howl of a hound without, which sounded as a presage of some coming ill.

"I am not deceived, Horace Mowbray," resumed the farmer. "You know too of a woman good, kind and loving, whose heart was wrung in bitter agony as she learned that the man who had sworn to love and cherish her had done his utmost to blast her fair fame?"

Still no response.

"Ay, and you know of a little innocent babe that was torn from the mother's already anguished heart by a vengeful hate which you had aroused all causelessly?"

"Causelessly" came in a deep, strange, thick tone from the soldier's pale lips.

"Yes, utterly without cause. Your cruel jealousy has wrought surely its full meed of evil. I see you—you whose promise was so fair—a degraded, nameless fugitive. I know what your wife has suffered, I know too that your child is dead or worse through your indirect means. I believe that you have had much to do with your brother's blighted life; and now—if I missed not that glance which I saw but now—I can see that if opportunity offered you would crown your wasted life by the murder of the man you hate—noble Tom Ducie. Oh, what a fall from the kindly, chivalrous Horace Mowbray I can recall! Nay, make no denial," he added. "I cannot be deceived. I am your old friend Charles Mortimer."

The soldier averted his face while he extended his hand.

"I did not recognise you, Charley. There is my hand, if you are not too proud to cross palms with one in my position, but"—and a frown came over his face—"never name to me again those of whom you have spoken."

"I must and will, for I can prove both your wife and your friend were guiltless of wrong to you."

At that moment from the chamber above the clear, sweet voice of a fair young girl who slowly disrobed herself by her white nest rang out:—"Peace on earth and mercy mild."

CHAPTER IV.

There was a laughing devil in his sneer
That raised emotions both of rage and fear;
And where his frown of hatred darkly fell
Hope, withering, fled—and mercy sigh'd farewell.
BROWN.

THE Christmas broke radiantly with a flood of rosy light more like the rich hues of the sun's springtide rising than the cold beams of a December day.

The clear blue sky above, the pure white snow below, alike glistened brilliantly, and seemed to mirror the smiles of unnumbered happy faces in thousands of happy homes.

But the dirty, squalid room at Jannaway's Rents looked even more miserable and disreputable by the clear light of day than it did in the sickly yellow gleam of the smoky lamp which dimly illuminated it on the previous night.

Its occupant however seemed to reckon little of the discomfort of his surroundings.

One might have said, looking at Gaston Mowbray's face, "Christmas has brought to this man also some cause for great joy—some boon long and anxiously desired."

It had done so, for it had witnessed the consummation of a long cherished, undying hate.

A smile of revenged triumph sat on the man's harsh features as he moved quickly to and fro across the room, though his heavy eyelids and haggard countenance indicated a sleepless night.

The state of the place accounted for the latter appearance. The room was strewn with odd-shaped pieces of wood and iron, and many packages of various forms and sizes, while in one corner a portion of the wainscot, constructed for the purpose, had been removed, revealing a dark descent and the top of some rude stairs.

One by one Gaston drew the heavy pieces of machinery towards the aperture, then descending first, dragged them down the staircase.

On the table stood an empty and a half-filled bottle, and engraving tools and bright plates of copper still lay where they had been when Mrs. Ducie paid her visit to the apartment.

Gaston re-ascended after depositing the last load in the vault and closed the secret door with great care.

It fell into its place with a sharp snap, leaving not the slightest trace of any crevice around it.

He struck it two or three heavy blows with his clenched fist. It returned the same dull, dead sound as did the solid old walls on either side.

"Good!" he ejaculated. "It will defy the sharpest of the law's tools to discover any hiding-place here. Now for the remainder of my task."

Gaston turned to the table and poured out a tumbler of brandy, which he drank at a draught.

"I shan't need a steady hand for a few weeks. I will give myself a holiday now. It has been a good year—ay, both for wealth and for vengeance, though neither vein is worked out yet. No, no!"

Then he threw himself into a chair beside the few embers that yet glowed in the grate and lighted his pipe.

"What has come of that cursed Grinkle?" he said, after a short interval of meditative smoking. "The villain ought to have been here with his report long since. Is there any fear that he may have bungled or has betrayed me? Phew! I know the cur too well for fear of that. He dares not do it!"

Gaston rose and paced the room impatiently. "The idiot may have fallen into the hands of the Philistines though. Well, even then he will keep his mouth shut, and I need not dread discovery by that means. Is that old hag on guard?"

Removing the heavy bolt, and partially unclosing the door, he peered out into the passage.

He could see that the old woman was standing immovable inside the massive outer door—gazing with lynx-like eye through a small opening where a sliding plate of iron had been inserted in such a position as to command a view of the alley, which was the only means of approach to the den.

"Good! Bess is staunch as a sleuthhound. Now to work again."

He had turned to the table and was about to collect the engraved plates lying there when his quick ear caught a low whistle. The next moment the outer door was opened noiselessly, and the harsh voice of the woman, mingled with a masculine one thick and husky, was heard speaking in subdued tones.

"Ah, here's Grinkle! Now for a pleasant story."

As a peculiar tap sounded on the door of the room Gaston again unbolted it and admitted the visitor.

He was a short, broad-shouldered, bow-legged individual with a horribly repulsive face. The forehead was "villanous low," the small, cunning eyes twinkled restlessly and held a ferocious light akin to that which gleams in the visual organs of a wolf; the face was seamed with frightfully grotesque markings—the evident channels burnt into the flesh by some strongly corrosive fluid; cavernous nostrils of enormous breadth; and retracted lips showing sharp, irregular fangs completed the resemblance of the man's face to that of some savage animal.

Although he stepped into the room firmly, it was evident he had been drinking heavily.

Gaston scowled angrily at the visitor.

"Is this the way you obey orders, Grinkle? Is this the state for a man to be in on a dangerous service?"

The frown was returned by a sullen, dogged glare.

"Ay," replied the man, huskily. "If you'd 'a been through what I have you'd 'a found the need of summat to drink. I might ask in my turn, is this the way to welcome a pal who has run the risk of bein' lagged for your sake? Give me some brandy."

Gaston, with evident reluctance, poured a quantity of the required liquor into the glass which his associate held out.

"Well, now, what success?"

"First rate," returned Grinkle, thawing under the influence of the fiery stimulant. "Couldn't ha' been better. Josh is nabbed right enough. I watched while they clapped the darbies on to him—though hanged if I could hardly stand it. 'Tain't often I cares for anything, but I'd ha' gone in at the 'ole lot, 'coppers' and all, and had Josh out of their clutches if it hadn't been for two things."

"Ah?" queried Gaston, with a sneer. "And what might they be?"

"First your orders and second that p'raps the copper was like to be a stiff-un."

"What's that?" cried Gaston, eagerly, "a policeman wounded—likely to die, eh?"

His face lighted up with a fiendish joy.

"Yes. The boy drew his pistol and pointed it as he jumped at the window to make off. At the same instant as I barred his way I saw it was the man as run me in for the job that got me my last long stretch. Curse him! I snatched the barker from Josh and fired. I saw the policeman drop, so I flung down the pistol and the letter and hooked it sharp."

"You saw the boy a captive in their hands?"

"I did. More 'n that, I heerd a squall as I topped the garden wall and reckon it must 'a been from readin' your letter."

"Good! You were not followed?"

"Ah! but I was though! I had to make as many doubles as a hunted hare. But I threw the bloodhounds off some way from here and am safe."

"That is well. We will speak presently of reward, which shall be ample. But first I am, as you see, nearly ready to leave this place. Is the other ready?"

"Yes, that crib's all right; and you'd better look sharp. Mother Bess told me a lady came last night. I can piece things together enough

to guess she's the one I saw, and if she knows this 'ken' you'll soon have 'em on your track."

"I will leave them but the empty walls, Grinkle. Have no fear of that, and—But what's the matter with Mother Bess?"

The voice of the old woman at this juncture could be plainly heard in excited altercation with someone on the outer side of the outer door.

"What is it, Bess?" cried Gaston, hastily.

"Here's some young swell outside who says he must see you—says it's most important."

"Is he a—?"

Before he could finish his sentence Grinkle growled out:

"It must be young Moss the 'forestall.' He said he'd call to-day, for he knew where he could plant some flimsies. He's allus a toff."

"Ah, yes. Let him in, Bess."

Gaston had no fear that the intruder might prove to be a detective. He knew the janitress of the door could recognise one under any disguise.

A firm yet elastic step sounded in the passage, and as Gaston retreated a pace to allow the visitor to enter a handsome young man of about twenty, fashionably attired, sprang into the room.

"At last!" he cried as he rushed to Gaston and embraced him—"father! dear father!"

The man released himself rudely and thrust the youth from him with such violence that he reeled back, and Grinkle rose with a threatening gesture and drew a short, heavy life-reserver from his pocket.

"Be quiet, Grinkle!" exclaimed Gaston, with a gesture of caution. "Leave us for a few minutes. I know this young man and have something to say to him."

Grinkle obeyed in his sullen manner, taking care to secure the bottle and carry it away unobserved.

When the door had closed Gaston turned on the young man a face distorted with passion.

"Ronald, what means this madman's freak? How came you here? Who told you of this place?"

Before he replied the youth gazed round with a curious expression.

"Father, I wanted to see you about a matter vital to me. I could not endure my solitary stay at Oxford while all the other students had gone from the place to their happy family circles. I knew you said you had no home to which I could come, but I knew also that you are rich, and wealth never wants a home."

"You have not answered my other question, boy," said Gaston, in tones of concentrated rage. "How did you find your way hither?"

"I went to the hotel from which you have always written me, father, and by giving a half-sovereign to one of the attendants I learned of this place."

"A servant of the hotel! How knew he of it?"

The man's face paled as he spoke.

"I do not know. Is there anything then so mysterious in that, father?"

As the youth spoke he mechanically lifted one of the gleaming plates of copper from the table, near which he stood, and glanced at it.

With a tiger bound Gaston sprang over to him and tore it from his hand.

"Father! what have I done?"

"What have you done? What have you not done?"

You have broken the solemn interdict I put upon you not to leave the college or come to me until I sent for you. I have been forced to seek this miserable den in this disguise to find some villains who have plundered me of much property, and now you come to haul me, in defiance of my express orders. You know not what you may have done. And all for what? A caprice! If you had been a homesick boy I could understand it, but a young man could surely have passed his time pleasantly during the few short weeks."

"It is not that, father. I could indeed have passed the time as if in elysium, and a happy glow lighted up the bright young face; but it is of that I come to speak. I know well that

you love me, father. Have I not the most luxurious chambers, the best horses, the most expensive jewellery of any man at the university? And I believe that you would grant me anything that would make me happy. Still I—"

"Proceed, sir. To what tends all this? Be quick, for I have much to do. Is it gaming or racing debts? Name the sum, or take an open cheque and depart by the next train."

"No."

The young man hesitated.

"No. I have no debts save those you permitted."

He made an evident effort for calmness, then went on.

"There is at Oxford a young lady whom—"

The father made a deprecating gesture.

"Peace, Ronald! I am not concerned in your liaisons! Only don't get entangled in any of these connections."

"Father!" cried the youth, his ingenuous face in a crimson blaze of shame. "Do not speak thus of Rose! She is all the world to me. She is true and good and noble, and she would not plight her troth or accept mine until it had your sanction. Oh, dear father, it is for this that I am here!"

The young man seized the elder one's hand appealingly.

Gaston turned a frowning face upon him.

"Pray who is this paragon?" he inquired, sneeringly.

"She is a lady, father. She comes of the border family of Dacre."

"What is she?"

"She teaches music."

Gaston gave a snort of disgust.

"Do you suppose, young fool, that I—wealthy and well-bred—would consent to ally my son, my only son, upon whom I have lavished love and wealth, with a miserable governess? Tush! As much love as you like, but mind—or my curse will be on you—no word of legal ties."

The youth recoiled and his features became ashy white.

"Father, had any other man said—" he began, then, covering his face with his hands, sank into a chair.

"Ronald!" listen to me," said the father, coming close to him, "let there be no mistake about—"

A sharp summons came on the door and the excited voice of Mother Bess screeched out:

"Quick, sir! Long Ted has been to say that four officers are coming this way. Lose no time! Grinkle has slipped off!"

Ronald lifted his head with an air of astonishment.

"You must quit here at once, my boy," said his father, roughly. "Go to the hotel, and I will join you there—quickly! Go at once—I command you!"

He opened the door and thrust the astounded young man into the passage. The old woman drew him to the street door with equal eagerness and pushed him out into the court.

In a state akin to stupor the young man walked to the entrance of the court just as a body of four policemen entered it.

"Have you seen a dark man with a very wrinkled face pass here, sir?" asked the sergeant who led them.

Ronald started. The description would have applied to the parent he had just left.

"No; what's wrong?"

The officer glanced at the youth, saw that he was a gentleman and answered, pleasantly:

"Ah, then he's trapped. We are in search for the famous forger and coiner, Count De Silva, as he calls himself. We've long been on his track and have him safe enough at last. If you like to step up this dirty alley, sir, you will stand a chance of seeing him, and I can tell you that De Silva—that ain't his right name of course—is a celebrity worth seeing."

With a strange sinking at his heart Ronald turned and accompanied the officers of the law. Despite his father's command, he felt irresistibly impelled to this. Not to himself could he explain the sinister foreboding which possessed him; but

he felt that it drew him back to the gloomy house with magnetic force.

Arrived at the door, the officers summoned those within loudly in the Queen's name.

The heavy portal remained shut, the sliding plate of iron being firmly closed.

This seemed to have been expected by the sergeant, who despatched a boy whom he had brought with him, disposed of his three men in different positions round the house, and placed himself opposite the door.

In a few minutes, during which the barred and shuttered windows had been tried and found securely fixed, the boy returned accompanied by a smith with a heavy sledge-hammer on his shoulder.

The strong door endured a shower of blows ere it yielded sufficiently to allow of the entrance of the sergeant, who, taking with him one of his men and the smith, rushed in, leaving the other two below.

They found the lower rooms empty, then rushed upstairs. The chamber doors were secured, but one after the other yielded to the hammer strokes.

In one room they found Mother Bess stretched on a bed, feigning sleep.

As they stood before the only room not entered, and the smith paused to wipe the perspiration from his brow, the sergeant said to his companion, gaily:

"I'd bet twenty to one the old fox is here! This means promotion for me, and you, too, Rodgers."

The stalwart officer made a grave gesture of assent.

"Go ahead," cried the sergeant.

Through the thick smoke of burning paper upon the hearth they could discern that the window was open.

They sprang towards it with a cry of victory.

At the shout the two men below and Ronald ran from the door to the branch of the alley that wound round the side of Gaston's refuge.

Then Ronald saw a sight which well nigh froze his blood.

From the open window where the policeman stood a stout cord was stretched to the lower roof of the opposite house. It had evidently been thrown, lasso-like, and a slip noose at the end had caught round a low chimney stack, and then been tightened from the window.

A man clung with a convulsive tenacity to the rope by hands and legs, working his way slowly and painfully to the side most distant from the window where the officers stood.

It was Gaston Mowbray!

Glancing over his shoulder, he saw that he was discovered and redoubled his efforts.

"Confound it! He will escape!" cried the sergeant.

"This will stop him," responded his taciturn subordinate, drawing a revolver from his pocket.

"No, stop, Rodgers. He's a plucky beggar, and I'd be sorry to polish him off so. I'll try his hold."

And he shook the rope violently.

But Gaston clung with a despairing tenacity, and in an instant more had grasped the broken coping of the opposite house and dragged himself over. An instant more and he stood on the snow-covered, slippery tiles. But a glance assured him that he was covered by the policeman's pistol, and he slunk behind the shelter of the chimney-stack, as though to gain breath and time for thought.

The young man below watched the drama with which he was so nearly concerned in silent horror.

"I'll have him—and alive, too," cried the sergeant, excitedly. "Here, Rodgers, hold the rope taut, and keep him covered."

The next instant the courageous officer had trusted himself to the frail support.

But, though brave, he had not the suppleness of the forger.

Very slow and painful was the sergeant's progress as his benumbed fingers clung with a desperate grip to the rough hemp.

His eyes were fixed vigilantly on the other side. How if the hunted man should meet him there and hurl him down as he reached the parapet?

He laughed quietly. Rodgers would give him several pieces of lead before that could happen, he thought, confidently.

But as he reached the centre of the space he saw a sight which made the hairs of his head rise up.

Round the edge of the chimney a long, thin, muscular hand crept, armed with a blade of shining steel.

The next instant he saw that keen blade applied vigorously to the hempen strands of the rope where they rose above the deep snow that lay around the chimney!

Ronald saw it also!

For one dreadful moment the sergeant's tongue refused its office. Then he called out, loudly:

"Fire, Rodgers, fire! Smash the villain's fingers! quick!"

In rapid succession the reports sounded. The little leaden pellets struck the brickwork with a sharp "ping!"

One! Two! Three!

And all the while that inexorable hand went to and fro!

One after the other the strands parted! They curled back like little snakes, mocking the distended eyes of the man slowly creeping on to death!

Four!

Gaston Mowbray's thumb was struck and flattened into a shapeless digit of bleeding flesh and crushed bone!

Still the knife was held by the strong fingers and went steadily on!

Five!

The last barrel emptied and still that hand not stopped!

The next instant the last strand parted, and, with a terrible cry, echoed from the blanched lips of Ronald, the sergeant fell through the terrible space upon the flags below!

(To be Continued.)

STRIKE WHILE THE IRON IS HOT.

Strike while the iron is hot;
Duller each moment its glow;
If you wait till the metal grows cold,
Small impression is made by the blow.

Opportunities seldom return
If neglected, so do not delay;
Be wise and improve them at once,
And grapple success while you may.

Fortune favours the prompt and alert,
Who are quick to discern and to seize
The straws that Chance wafts in their way,
Before they're swept off by the breeze.

To hesitate, sloth and neglect
Were the prizes of Life e'er decreed?
No; the vigilant, active, and keen,
You will find, are the ones that succeed.

When the moment for action arrives,
To be prompt be it ever your rule.
Strike while the iron is hot,
And don't wait for the metal to cool.

The gorilla recently exhibited at the Westminster Aquarium has died at Berlin.

The great railway bridge across Severn is making good progress, and is likely to be finished in a year's time. In total length this bridge will not nearly equal that across the Tay opened a few weeks ago, but the two widest spans will be far wider than any in that structure, and will be about the widest in the world. The bridge will cost about £200,000.

THE INCONVENIENCE OF EAR-RINGS.

Goon people, who deprecate the vanities of this world, tell us that the piercing of ears and the hanging of jewels therein, is a custom of heathen origin, and that in ancient days only savages thus adorned themselves. Very likely they are right; we have never studied the matter.

Every lady now-a-days must have her ears pierced, and she wears in them expensive sets of jewels.

The ear-ring of to-day, however fashionable it may be, is an intolerable nuisance! It is a diabolical combination of hooks, and links, and horseshoes, and crescents, and pendants, and fretwork generally—just calculated to "hitch into" everything which touches it!

A woman with a fashionable pair of ear-rings is never sure of herself. She cannot be a free agent. She is constantly getting those ornaments caught in her laces, and her curls, and her veils, and the feathers on her hat, and in goodness only knows what. And there she has to stay and wriggle and twist her head helplessly from side to side, till some female friend comes to the rescue, for no man could ever get her out of the tangle without breaking something, and thinking language too forcible to be spoken.

Lace fraises are bad enough for "catching" on ear rings, but gauze veils are worse. What can be more provoking than to be in the street some day with one of those gauze things over your face, and no one can see plainly enough through one of them to tell black from white, and you see your rival, Mrs. P., sailing along on the opposite side? She has got on her new spring snit, and you are dying to see how it is trimmed, and if the puffings and flutings are deeper than yours, and you seize on that veil to draw back and find it caught fast in your ear-rings! You tug fiercely at it; but gauze, though thin, is strong, and it only pulls a little, but does not give! Then you try the other side of it, and lo! that is caught too!

And meanwhile, Mrs. P. is lost in the crowd, and you must go home, still in ignorance as to the number of furbelows on that dress of hers! It is enough to put any woman out of temper.

The pendant of one ear-ring is always getting lost. Nobody ever yet lost both pendants! Who ever lost a pair of gloves? Doesn't everyone lose the right-hand glove, if any, and did you ever lose both gloves at once? Of course not; there would be too much pleasure in it, and just so of the pendants of ear-rings. One manages to get lost, and then the pair have to go to a jeweller before they are fit for wear.

We have often thought that it would be a comfort, and a great saving of patience and temper, if every created and manufactured thing could go to destruction—like the "One-Horse Shay," all parts at a time. There would be no more mending in this world, and the daily papers would no longer teem with advertisements, mystical to the majority of readers.

WONDERS OF THE SEA.

Who can tell of all the wondrous things that live in the sea? In the Indian Ocean, many feet below the surface of the water, grow woods quite as luxuriant as any jungles or thickets we read of in South America. Some of the trees grow as high as two houses piled on one another. They are called by a hard name—"nereocysten." The roots resemble coral, and from the slender stem grows a cluster of very long leaves. Other trees grow almost as high, and end in one single huge leaf that is about the size of our forest

The accumulation of wealth is followed by an increase of care, and by an appetite for more. He who seeks for much will ever be in want of much. It is best with him to whom God has given that which is sufficient, though every superfluity be withheld.



[A FIT OF TEMPER.]

A WOMAN SPURNED.

CHAPTER XIII.

Doubt and fear are the scourge of the weak and base,
And hope, nerve, energy, manhood's creed.

BRENTON, feeling that he had been completely routed in his encounter that evening, went into the open air and walked about a few moments before going up to his wife.

When he did join her he thought she was weeping, but that fear was put to flight by the sharp tone with which she started up and asked:

"Is that woman gone? The insolent, shameless creature! To come here to-day on such an errand as hers! Of course you sent her away as she came, Mr. Brenton?"

"I should have done so if I had been left to deal with her alone. But others interfered. Your aunt and that odious Kirke had been listening at the door, and they overheard me say that I had refused the money she claimed. They refused to believe my statement that it had been lost legitimately, though I can swear that it is true, and—and—"

"And you agreed to make restitution?" she exclaimed, when he hesitated. "After what I said about bribing her to be silent you dared to do that? What am I to think of you after this, Mr. Brenton?"

"I was driven to the wall," he sullenly replied, "and it is not your place to reproach me with what I could not help. Your aunt seems to have taken a sudden fancy to Miss Deering, and she sustained her cause so energetically that there was no resource but to yield for the present to the demands made on me. I gave the girl my note, with Mrs. Tardy for security, but I shall prove duller of wit than I think myself if I have to pay it."

"If you do not of course Aunt Sarah will," was the sharp reply, "and how much will you

gain by that, for it must come out of the inheritance at her death."

Brenton vaguely replied:

"I have six months to work in, as the note is not payable till the first of January. There is no knowing what may happen before that time."

Emma uttered a slight gasp, and looked searchingly at him, but, as Mrs. Tardy had complained, he was "bearded so like a pard" that it was difficult to read anything in his face when his eyes were not turned full upon one.

He kept them now fixed on the twilight landscape without.

After a pause she slowly asked:

"And if nothing happens, what then? You will have to submit to this extortion, for, as I understand your statement, it is nothing less."

"Yes, I shall pay the money if I cannot make affairs take the course I wish. Rest assured of one thing—Constance Deering shall derive no benefit from the pledge I have been forced to give her. I never seriously thought of her as my wife."

"But she had explicitly stated that you had asked her to marry you, and she had not accepted you."

"And I say that I never had the slightest idea of throwing myself away on a girl in her position. If I had been in love with her I would not have done it, but I never cared for her. You have my word against hers, and you may choose which you will believe."

Emma pouted a little, but there was something in Brenton's manner which told her that it was best to say no more on this subject, and she only asked:

"What has become of the creature? She has gone away, of course, though I have not heard a carriage drive around."

"No, she is still here as a guest of Mrs. Tardy."

"Here! and kept on the footing of a guest!" almost shrieked the fair bride. "I regard this as a deadly insult to both you and myself. I

will go at once and speak to Aunt Sarah, and tell her what I think."

She would have risen from her chair, but Brenton laid his hand on her shoulder, and impressively said:

"That course will only embroil matters between you and Mrs. Tardy, and she really could do no less than ask Miss Deering to spend the night here. It seems that she met with a slight accident in getting off the train, and one of her feet is severely sprained. She had to be taken upstairs by Kirke, the odious Caliban! and she will not be able to come down to supper."

"And do they intend to keep her here till she is quite well again? It would be like Aunt Sarah to do so."

Brenton shrugged his shoulders.

"It does not matter much to us, for we shall leave Selwood to-morrow. I wished to spend a week or two here to recommend myself to your relatives, but that will be of no use now. Mrs. Tardy is a woman of strong prejudices, and the professor sees with her eyes; he thinks her judgment of character infallible, and I can see that mine has fallen to zero in her estimation. It is evident that she gives the fullest credence to Miss Deering's story, and condemns me accordingly. Under those circumstances, of course I shall leave as soon as possible, and you, I hope, will not object to a tour."

"Oh, that will be charming!" cried Emma, in rapture. "I can wear the beautiful dresses I ordered from Paris for my summer outfit. Let us go away from this poky old place, and you need never come back to it till you take possession as its master. Let Aunt Sarah think what she will of you or me, she cannot disinherit me, thank Heaven!"

"You are glad to go then, Emma, and with me?"

"Glad! of course I am. All my aunt can take from me she will, whether she likes you or not. Agnes is her darling, and she will be sure to get her savings. She says she will not accept them, but that is all bosh. She will be only too glad to get them."

"Very different," assented Brenton, vaguely. "And if Mrs. Tardy lives many years longer she will have something to leave that will be worth accepting. She must already have laid by a pretty sum, and with her business capacity she will know how to invest it in such a way as will add thousands to it before she is called on to go the way of all flesh. It seems very hard that so much should be taken from you, Emma."

With a sigh, she replied:

"It is hard and hardly fair to me. But there is no help for it. In the end, I declare, Agnes may get as much or more than I shall, though the whole estate came from my own uncle."

With a singular expression Brenton said:

"I hardly think your aunt's life so good a one as you believe. Those strong constitutions often break down suddenly, and it would not surprise me if such a thing happened to your aunt. She is so active—so untiring in her energy, that she will wear herself out long before she dreams of 'casting off this mortal coil.'"

Emma shivered slightly, for there was something in his words and manner that chilled her. But after a slight pause she lightly said:

"I am sure that I shall have little cause to grieve if such a thing should happen."

She rose, took his arm, and together they descended to the lighted room in which the others were assembled.

She had assumed a smiling air, and Brenton looked as quiet and composed as if nothing had occurred to ruffle his temper.

The professor, looking pale and exhausted, was already in his place, but Mrs. Tardy and Kirke stood awaiting the appearance of the newly-wedded pair.

He looked grim and annoyed, and had a sarcastic smile on his lips as the two approached and took their places.

"Dear uncle," said Emma, in her most caressing manner, "you look as if you have suffered greatly, and I do not wonder. Such a shock as that poor, blundering Captain Gibbs gave us all. For a moment I really believed that dear Agnes was lost to us for ever."

The professor shuddered.

"I beg that you will not recall it, Emma. The shock was terrible; but do you know that I am not the only invalid in the house? We have a young lady here who was hurt on the railroad, and like a good Samaritan Kirke took charge of her, and finding that she was known to Mr. Brenton has brought her out with him."

There had been no time to explain to the professor, even if Mrs. Tardy had been willing to do so, and he had only been told of the new guest and how she came to beat Selwood.

A cloud came over the sunny expression Emma had assumed, and with curling lip she said:

"I have heard of Miss Deering's arrival—indeed I have seen and spoken with her myself. I am sure we are much indebted to Mr. Kirke for taking so much interest in an acquaintance of Mr. Brenton's."

"Not at all," said Kirke, bowing, and affecting to take her remark literally. "I owed a good turn to Mr. Brenton, and I have paid my debt—that is all."

If a look could have killed, Kirke would have been scathed by that which flashed from Emma's eyes.

She understood his meaning perfectly—that he was congratulating himself on his escape from all chances of a union with herself.

With a malicious laugh she said:

"It is fortunate that you so soon had the opportunity to return good for evil, but it would be well to ascertain that the score is accurately balanced. There are some services that are actuated as much by malice as by thoughtfulness for others."

"That may be, and I do not profess to be above such motives when I have an unfair antagonist to deal with. Human nature is very faulty, Mrs. Brenton, and I do not affect to be superior to the majority of my kind."

"But who is this young lady? And why are you and Emma sparring at each other about her?" asked the professor.

Before Kirke could speak, Emma said:

"She is not a lady—she is a young person who has had some dealings with Mr. Brenton, and she chose this time, of all others, to press her claims. I suppose she thought that sooner than allow me to know the object of her visit, he would comply with any demand she chose to make. She was right, for he has been weak enough to give her all she asked."

Kirke dryly said:

"Pardon me, madame, nothing was settled till after Miss Deering had seen you and explicitly stated her errand in your presence. I must do her that much justice, as she is not here to speak for herself, and your words might mislead Professor Tardy. It would hardly be fair to allow him to form an unjust judgment of the stranger who has been received within his gates."

Emma scornfully retorted:

"I cannot see of what consequence to her it can be what opinion my uncle may form of a person so far removed from his sphere that, after she leaves this house, he is never likely to hear of her again. Your chivalry carries you too far, Mr. Kirke, though I am sorry to find so little of it exerted on my behalf, sir."

He bowed with a slightly mocking air, and Brenton brusquely broke in:

"The affair is settled to the satisfaction of all parties concerned, and I see no use in discussing it. As to Miss Deering, Emma is mistaken in placing her so low in the scale of society as to preclude association with her on terms of equality. Her father was once a rich man, but he failed in business, as many others do, and never was able to reinstate himself."

Kirke involuntarily wondered what Brenton hoped to gain by speaking in defence of Constance Deering.

"To conciliate Mrs. Tardy," was his mental comment a moment later, when he noted that Brenton's words were addressed immediately to that lady, and he saw that her face relaxed from its severe expression.

She almost graciously said:

"Thank you, Mr. Brenton, for confirming my impression concerning this young lady—for a lady certainly she is—though Emma refers to her as if she were almost beneath notice. 'Fine feathers make fine birds' with some people, but I have lived long enough in the world to distinguish between the genuine thing and the jackdaw in peacock's clothing."

"Thank you, aunt," said Emma, pale with passion, as she arose from the table and pushed her chair back, "since I am snubbed by the man I have so lately honoured with my hand, and compared to the bird in the fable by you, I will retire to my own room. Before I leave, however, I will say that this is the last evening I shall spend in this house. I shall have my things packed to-night, and be ready to leave by the morning train. I wish you all a very good-evening."

Before Mrs. Tardy could recover from her surprise sufficiently to speak Emma swept out of the room, leaving the party staring at each other in mute surprise.

When the old lady gained her breath, she said:

"Well, I declare, that does beat all! I wish you patience, Mr. Brenton, with such a temper as that to deal with. You'll need it, I can tell you, and I must say I am just worn out with Emma's tantrums."

Brenton curtly said:

"Emma has made a scene which is quite unnecessary, madame. We had settled before we came downstairs that we would leave to-morrow. After what occurred here this evening it will be quite impossible for us to remain longer at Selwood. Your own judgment should tell you that, Mrs. Tardy. I have suffered in your estimation, I can plainly see, and where I hoped to win kindly regard I cannot put up with mere courtesy. The day will come when you will be forced to do me justice; until it does arrive we are best apart."

The two young men arose from the table at the same time, and as they passed into the hall Kirke stiffly said:

"Have you anything to say to me, Mr. Bren-

ton? If so I am quite ready to listen, and to respond as you may wish."

"Meaning, I suppose, that after injuring me as deeply as you could, and covertly insulting my wife, that I shall give you the chance to shoot me down like a dog," said Brenton, almost hissing the words through his lips. "I am no duellist, Mr. Kirke, and the pay for such murderous folly is over among sensible men. This is all I have to say to you; but I will repay you in my own time and in my own way for the evil turn you have done me with malice prepense."

"Which, interpreted, means that you will strike me in the back when opportunity offers, without allowing me a chance to defend myself, eh?"

Brenton glared at him a moment with clenched hand, feeling within himself the spirit of murder, without the courage to attempt it.

"The tall, wiry form of his adversary, and the determined look in his eyes told him that he had no fear of the pugilistic skill of which he had so lately boasted."

He turned away with an oath, and said:

"I have nothing more to say to you under this roof, sir."

"Umph," muttered Kirke, a coward, as I might have known from his language to that poor girl this morning. A nice pair this husband and wife are. I will keep my eye on you, Mr. Brenton, and now I believe I will go out in the woods and chant a psalm of thanksgiving for my escape from the matrimonial noose fitted to the choking point by that fair terrapont upstairs. Brenton, I forgive you. You are my scapegoat, and I ought to feel more kindly towards you than I do. But human nature is weak, and the old Adam is strong within me, I am afraid."

Communing with himself in this eccentric manner, he strolled out into the grounds, meditating upon the occurrence of the afternoon, and making up his mind that Brenton needed watching on more accounts than one.

Left alone with the professor, Mrs. Tardy gave him a clear account of the scene in the parlour in which Brenton had been so signally worsted.

Mrs. Tardy then went upstairs to seek Miss Deering.

Relieved from suffering, and worn out with all she had gone through that day, Constance had fallen into a light slumber, from which she aroused as her hostess looked down on her.

Mrs. Tardy said to herself that Brenton must have a most unimpressible nature if this attractive creature had really made no impression upon him.

"But, then, she's not of his kind," she said, half aloud, "and, as a rule, 'like sees like.'"

The eyes of Constance flew open at the sound.

"Mrs. Tardy, you have befriended the friendless at a most critical moment in my life, and I shall never, never cease to be grateful as long as my heart throbs with life. What can I do? What shall I ever be able to do, to show you how truly I appreciate the kindness I have met within this house? I was a stranger, and you took me in, and ministered to me as if I had claims upon you, yet I came to bring discord where there was peace before."

"Not much of that for some time past, but it will settle all over the house now, I think," said Mrs. Tardy, with a curious smile. "Wait till you are well again, and I will tell you how you can repay me for the trifling services I have rendered you. I only came in to see how you are getting on, and I will leave you now to the repose you need. Good-night, and do credit to my skill by recovering as rapidly as possible."

She left the room without allowing a reply, and Constance fell asleep, wondering what her last words could mean.

On the following morning Emma came down in her travelling dress to partake of the early breakfast which had been ordered. Brenton had evidently made his peace with her, for they seemed on the best terms as they came together

to the table, at which Mrs. Tardy was already seated.

The morning greeting on her side was extremely cold, but Emma diffusely exclaimed:

"Dear aunt, how kind it was of you to rise at this hour to see us off. I behaved so naughtily last evening that I hardly expected so much consideration from you. I ask your forgiveness, Aunt Sarah, but you know what an impulsive creature I am, and how little I have been taught to control myself."

"Umph! I know what an ungovernable temper you have, and that you make no effort to keep it in bounds."

Emma's lips curled, and her eyes flashed.

"My temper may be faulty, but it is not you who should comment on it in this way before my newly-wedded husband."

"If you had not made it so patent to him yourself, perhaps I should not have done so," was the grim reply. "Let us cry quits, Emma, and at least part in peace. I wish you well, wherever your lot may be cast, and if you ever get into trouble I will try to aid you as far as possible."

Emma tossed her head haughtily.

"I thank you, aunt, but I hardly anticipate having to call on you for assistance in the future. A handsome bridal present would be more to the purpose than vague offers which you will never be asked to make good. I have expected that much of you, but it seems that I am to be disappointed."

"Haven't you enough of your own that you ask me to fall into the ridiculous fashion of loading down a bride with things she does not need? You already know what I think of such vulgar ostentation. If the girl is poor it is thoughtful kindness to give her what may be useful to her; but if she is rich she can afford to supply her own wants without levying contributions on her friends. That's the view I take of the new-fangled way of lavishing presents on those who can supply their own needs."

Brenton here arose from the table, and taking out his watch, said:

"I regret to interrupt you, ladies, but it is time that we were off, Emma, if we hope to meet the train. Have you taken leave of the professor yet?"

"I have had no time, but I will run in and tell him good-bye now."

She arose from the table with that intention, but Mrs. Tardy stopped her by saying:

"Proff did not get to sleep till very late, and he is now sleeping soundly."

"It does not matter," said Emma, coldly. "This is of a piece with all the rest of the treatment I have received in this house. I am fond of uncle, yet you will not allow me to ask his blessing, if he will bestow nothing else on me."

Mrs. Tardy smiled grimly.

"He has nothing else to bestow, and I insist that, for the present, you shall accept it vicariously. I give you my own blessing united with his, and I promise to pray earnestly to the Giver of all good that you may be endowed with a more charitable nature, and become to my husband what you have never been to me, a spirit of comfort and peace."

"Thank you, aunt, but the French have a proverb which says that 'curses, like chickens, come home to roost.' Come, Mr. Brenton, I am quite ready to go with you after this affectionate parting with my nearest relative."

Brenton shook hands with Mrs. Tardy, muttering some inaudible words, and she, true to herself at the last, said:

"Heaven grant you patience and forbearance, sir, for you will sorely need them in the time to come."

Emma took his offered arm and swept out of the room.

"I wish we had parted more pleasantly,"

Mrs. Tardy muttered. "I meant to be kind to her on this last morning in spite of her aggravating ways; but who could keep the peace with such a woman as Emma?"

"Who indeed?" asked Kirke, who had just come downstairs, and seeing her through the open door of the vestibule went forward to join

her in time to overhear her last words. "My dear madame, is it possible that Mrs. Brenton renewed last night's unpleasantness this morning? I expected something better than that, even from her."

Mrs. Tardy sighed.

"I don't know, Jemmy. She never showed what she is so plainly till within the past few weeks. Her worst qualities seem to have developed by her acquaintance with the man she so hurriedly married."

"Or by her failure to rival Agnes," shrewdly thought Kirke; but he only said:

"I was foolish to suppose that a fine lady like your niece would see anything to appreciate in a plain man like myself; and I made a still greater mistake in thinking that there could ever be any sympathy in our tastes or pursuits. I give her up thankfully to the man she preferred, and I hope her life will be a prosperous one. Happy such a spirit as hers can never be."

"You are consoled, then, for losing her?"

"Consoled! Ah, I tremble to think of the narrow escape I made. But I beg your pardon, Mrs. Tardy; I forgot that the lady in question is your niece, and, aside from her temper, she is a very charming woman. I admired her sincerely, and, at one time, I thought to win her for my wife would make me a happy man; but I bowed with thankful humility to the decree which prevented such a consummation as that."

"And I, too, am glad for your sake, for Emma will lead her husband a dance, and rule him with a rod of iron. I think I shall try to keep Miss Deering altogether—that is if she proves as agreeable as she is nice looking."

Kirke laughed silently.

"Is this intended as an aggravation to Brenton, or are you really so deeply interested in Miss Deering as to think of offering her a home at Selwood?"

Mrs. Tardy made an affirmative gesture.

"I thoroughly approve of such an arrangement, Mrs. Tardy, and I hope you may be able to carry it into effect. If Miss Deering will give me her address, and an order for such things as she may need, I will bring them back with me when I return."

Mrs. Tardy slyly said:

"I think I am not the only one who was favourably impressed by this young lady, Jemmy. You are not a lady's man, yet you are offering to put yourself out of the way to do her a service."

Kirke's sallow face flushed, but he got over his confusion.

Mrs. Tardy then proceeded to Miss Deering's room, and said:

"I cannot consent to let you leave Selwood till we are better acquainted; so that is settled. I am a woman who always will have her own way, Miss Deering, and you must simply submit to what I assure you is for your own good."

She placed Constance on the sofa, and left her to the grateful thoughts that filled her mind at this cordial and unexpected kindness.

(To be Continued.)

SCIENCE.

PETROLEUM FOR REMOVING SCALE IN BOILERS.

Petroleum has recently been successfully employed for the removal and prevention of scale in steam boilers, also for the removal of deposits from water pipes where the water contains large quantities of lime. It has the effect of penetrating and rotting the scale, causing it to become porous and detach itself from the surface to which it is attached. It is a very simple remedy and can be used in small quantities without any difficulty whatever, say about a quart every week for about a twenty-five horse power boiler, and in quantities more or less, according to the size of the boilers. It may be introduced in the feed water or through the safety valve, or in any way most convenient for that purpose; but to be effective it must be pure. The heavy oil used for lubricating purposes in

cold situations is the most efficient, as the refined oil of this description is of no use, as it is soon expelled by the heat.

ANALYSIS OF PETROLEUM.—Anything in relation to petroleum is presumed to be interesting at the present time, and for this reason it may not be out of place to notice that the chemical constituents of rock oil are carbon and hydrogen, generally ninety parts carbon and ten parts hydrogen, by weight. The proportions form about an equal bulk, carbon being heavy while hydrogen is light and volatile. Originally, they both existed as gases, and by their union they form protocarburett of hydrogen, which, being condensed, forms naphtha, or light volatile oil; and after the escape of a portion of hydrogen, the product is petroleum. By a further escape of hydrogen the product becomes more solid, a bitumen, pitch, or asphaltum, the higher stages of condensation being candle, bituminous, and anthracite coal. The diamond is the purest state of solidified carbon, and is probably a crystallization of carbonic acid gas, unadulterated with hydrogen. Coal oil is artificially produced by converging coal into gas, adding a proper equivalent of hydrogen and then condensing the gas. Iron, sulphuric acid, and water, when placed in contact, give off hydrogen gas. Burning charcoal gives off carbonic acid gas. Mix these gases in proper proportion, subject them to heat under confinement, then allow the heated gas to escape through water, and the condensation will produce carbon oil on the surface of the water.

SPECIFIC HEAT OF WATER.—According to new experiments by Munchhausen, of Moscow, the specific heat of water taken at unity at 32° is at 212° Fah. 1.0302, as against 1.013 found by Régnault, and 1.122 determined by Jamin. The investigations were made with the greatest refinement of accuracy.

MAGNETIZATION OF SHEFFIELD STEEL BARS.—M. Gauguier, who for some time has been conducting investigations with the influence of heat on magnetization, has recently announced some very curious results obtained with Sheffield steel bars. He found that, when certain bars were magnetized at a high temperature and cooled, their magnetism entirely disappeared, and then changed sign; so that if a bar had been magnetized when hot in a certain direction, it was found to be magnetized in the opposite direction after returning to the ordinary temperature. When heated afresh, the inverse magnetism, which is always very feeble, vanished, and the primitive magnetism reappeared. The same change of sign is reproduced when the bar is again cooled.

TEST FOR THE PRESENCE OF GOLD IN SOLUTIONS.—Protosulphate of iron gives a brown precipitate, which acquires a metallic lustre when rubbed. Proto-chloride of tin gives a purple or blackish precipitate, insoluble in muriatic acid. Sulphuretted hydrogen and hydrosulphurett of ammonia give a black precipitate, insoluble in simple acids. Ammonia gives reddish-yellow precipitate (fulminating gold) with tolerably concentrated solutions, either at once, or on boiling the liquid. Liquid of potassa gives, with neutral solutions of gold, a similar precipitate to that formed by ammonia, insoluble in excess.

ELECTRICAL TREATMENT OF WOUNDS.—M. Onimus has lately observed that the suppuration of wounds or ulcers may, by means of continuous electric currents, be increased or diminished, according to the direction of the current. The descending current, that is, when the positive pole is placed near the nerve centre and the negative at the periphery, increases the suppuration, but, at the same time, the phenomena of nutrition are more considerable, and the fleshy pimples are formed with great rapidity. On the other hand, with the ascending current, the suppuration disappears very quickly. A small crust forms on the wound, which is difficult to remove, and under it there is a cicatrization.

EFFECT OF POISON ON ANIMALS.—A French doctor has recently called attention to the fact that hemlock seed is eaten by mice without apparently producing fatal effects on them. He has recently succeeded in supporting two mice

for eight days on hemlock seed. They ate it at first with reluctance, and even seemed to suffer from this diet. At the end of eight days one of the mice seemed very ill, and next day he found the sick mouse half eaten by the other. The animals had eaten hemlock seed in quantities which would have been fatal to a man.

The flame of a mixture of two volumes of coal gas with three of carbonic acid gives a maximum heat of 1,000 deg. One volume of coal gas with two of carbonic acid gives 860 deg., while the maximum temperature reached with the flame of one volume of coal gas and three of carbonic is 780. Mixtures of coal gas and atmospheric air decrease in heat in the proportion of the latter exceeds what is necessary for combustion. —F. Rossetti.

HOW TO SOFTEN RESIN.—Melt the resin, and while in a state of fusion add tar. The proper degree of hardness can be ascertained by dropping a small portion of the melted mass into water.

FEMALE INFLUENCE.

The influence wielded by woman is one of the many blessings that surround the pathway of man, leading him in the road to honour, virtue and happiness, guarding his conduct and ruling his actions, moulding his character and shaping his destiny for good or evil. Where is it that she does not control the obdurate heart of man? Where is the man who is so degraded, so lost to every noble quality of the heart, that he cannot be moved by the sweet smile of a good woman, who can touch the sympathetic chords of the human heart, and cause it to vibrate to the hidden depths of the soul?

How many a gay and thoughtless youth has been reclaimed from the destructive haunts of vice by the sweet, persuasive voice of this guardian angel of man, who is ever removing the thorns from life's dreary pathway with her own willing and devoted hands! When will we ever learn to prize female affection?

Oh, what joys from woman spring!
Source of bliss and purest peace!
Eden could no comfort bring
Till fair woman showed her face.

Just permit your imagination for one moment to be carried back to the old days of the Roman Republic, and view the state of the brave and proud patrician, Coriolanus, when banished from the home of his honoured ancestors, and found refuge among the fierce and barbarous Volscians, and when he had returned, and was encamped around the wall of the "eternal city" with those revengeful hordes, ready to wreak vengeance upon the inhabitants of that devoted city whose anticipated doom was almost sealed. After the deputies were sent to entreat him to spare their city, their homes, their wives and their children, they were dismissed with haughtiness, and their proposals treated even with contempt. But when the mother, wife and the children of Coriolanus were sent to intercede with him, and his mother began to reproach him for his cruelty toward his countrymen, how soon his proud heart began to soften under her gentle supplications, and his sad and bitter exclamation, "Mother, I yield! you have saved Rome, but you have destroyed your son."

Ah, see what that mother, by her persuasive eloquence, accomplished; even that which the force and valour of the Roman legions could not do!

THE SOLOMON OF AN OMNIBUS.

The other day an omnibus standing empty near one of the Paris railway stations was suddenly invaded by a host of passengers just arrived from the suburbs by train. When the inside and outside of the conveyance had been pretty well filled the conductor began to count his crew; then it was found that one more than the regulation number of fourteen had clambered up to the imperiale. Thereupon a summons on

the part of this scrupulous functionary to one of the travellers to come down was followed by a hot and prolonged discussion among his hearers as to which of them had arrived the last.

Finding that his exhortations were vain, the conductor next called in a superior official, who in more dictatorial tones demanded who was the last comer. Again, however, there was no intelligible answer, each one of the outside passengers repudiating the impeachment on his own behalf with as much vehemence as he urged it against his neighbour. The dilemma was hopeless, and it was clear that the quarrelsome crowd installed on the imperiale was either unable or unwilling to cast out the real offender. At the same time, it was still more impossible for the powers that be to pick him out, and there was no disposition on the part of the fifteen to draw lots which should sacrifice himself.

What was to be done? A less conscientious conductor would perhaps have applied the maxim "ambulando solvitur," and put an end to all difficulties by driving on with his extra load. But this was not at all in accordance with the ideas of Jehu as to his duty. With an ingenuity which deserves almost as much credit as his fidelity to routine, he caused the omnibus to be face about and relegated to a position behind a number of rival vehicles. The one offending passenger, together with the fourteen innocents and all those contained inside, saw themselves condemned to wait half an hour or so until the other omnibuses had all moved on. Whether this dreary prospect had the effect of inducing anyone to play the part of Jonah and descend history unluckily saith not.] The tale comes to us in an incomplete state; but at any rate, to use a stereotyped phrase, the fifteen were, at the time this report was despatched, "left sitting."

WHO DID IT?

OR,

THE WARD'S SECRET.

CHAPTER XXV.

SOME weeks have elapsed since the closing of The Wilderness and the departure of the invalid and her companion for foreign shores.

The melancholy little party of travellers had taken easy stages to their destination, which, by Mr. Leclerc's express desire, was fixed at Florence for the winter.

It would be more gay and populous," he said, "than many of the other invalid resorts, and it was his one great object to surround Pauline with every possible adjunct of cheerfulness.

"She is already improving," he observed to his ward. "Her brain is recovering its tone, and now that the numbing influence of the shock has in a measure passed away, she will speedily regain her former spirits."

Viola was simply stunned as well as disgusted at the sang-froid and unconsciousness that her guardian now exhibited as to the tragedy which had been enacted at The Wilderness.

Had she been less terribly interested in the event, had she known nothing save what was patent to all, there might have been less audacity in the attempt to ignore its horror; but as it was, in spite of the understanding that the subject was a forbidden one, and in spite of the assertion on which he fell back that Viola had no grounds for accusing him which could be in any way supported by poor, it needed all her quiet patience to tolerate the bold insolence of her guardian's tactics.

But it seemed to be her sole clue to the past and the future; she felt as if the presence of the father of Pauline was a species of link to the unhappy dead, and besides, by her father's will and pleasure, Paul Leclerc was her sole and legal guardian till time should free her from the bondage.

And on the same principle of action, perhaps,

she tolerated Louise as an attendant; nay, she felt less difficulty in thus bearing with the French trained maid than her guardian.

There was a subdued air, a gravity, and an amount of penitence reserve in Louise's whole tone that propitiated her young mistress.

True, she had been faithless to her duty, she had worked much wrong and injury, but how could Viola be severe on one whose station and education exposed her to temptation, whose whole soul was in the exciting interests of love and intrigue, and who had done what she could to atone for her errors?

And besides the girl felt that she might in a measure preserve one friend, even by her very indulgence to such faultiness.

Louise knew the past.

Louise had aided her in the attempts to save the innocent though fated Neville; and even now there might arise emergencies that would need some such ally as the clever and zealous soubrette.

Now at length they were at Florence—Florence the magnificent, Florence the beautiful, and even Viola's grief was in spite of herself diverted from its absorbing strength by its rare treasures of art and its graceful architecture.

Mr. Leclerc was zealous in at once displaying all the attractions to his charge, and in taking all the measures in his power to procure for her admission to the circle of their countrymen and natives, which would bring back Pauline to her former tastes and habits.

"Viola, if you have any feminine sympathies you will do your utmost to assist me in this necessary work," he said, one day, soon after their arrival, to his ward.

"I am willing to do all in reason, sir," she answered; "but I scarcely consider that Pauline would wish such an unnatural effort as you propose."

"Why unnatural, child? You forget what is the real state of affairs," he said impatiently. "Pauline was not even openly betrothed to—the deceased. It is scarcely correct for her to have worn any sign of mourning for him, and now it is my decided wish that you should both of you appear both in dress and in manner as near as possible like other girls of your age and position in life."

Viola quietly shook her head.

"It is of course open to you to arrange for your daughter," she said, calmly, "for myself I decline any change in the black which I have worn for my father, and continue to wear for the man to whom my faith was pledged?"

"Without my consent?"

"Without your consent, sir; but that would not have affected either my actions or your authority," she replied, coldly. "There would have been no appeal to you, so long as I was under your control, nor would I have disobeyed a guardian appointed by my father. However, it is worse than cruel to discuss such things," she added, impatiently. "It is enough that I do not intend to show any disrespect to one so deeply injured."

"I suppose your reverence for your father will extend to your obeying me as to going into the world here with my suffering child?" he said, angrily. "Perhaps your sympathies are only with the other sex, Miss Devaux?"

Her lips moved, but she controlled the bitter rejoinder on her lips.

"I shall try to soften her fate as much as is in my power," she said. "And it shall not be from my lips that she shall ever know how doubly aggravated has been her trial. That is the best sympathy I can give."

Paul Leclerc's eyes lowered under the full, unflinching gaze of his ward.

It was reproachful, contemptuous, severe in its youthful gravity and courage; but yet he dared not resent its rebuke—he was not yet wholly independent of her power.

"You are a sentimental, foolish child, Viola, but I must bear with you, I suppose," he said, with affected lightness. "And so to change the subject we will agree on a compromise between us. So long as you will accompany Pauline into all the amusements I wish to contrive for her I

can easily arrange about your sombre tastes in costume. Now, we will have done with needless wranglings, and get ready for a drive. I intend taking you to the Florentine Gallery, and then, afterwards to return one or two calls that have been left for us.

Viola left the room and prepared to obey her guardian's behest.

Louise was ever ready as if by instinct for any need of her young lady.

And now, when she arranged her toilette for the expedition, it was done with as much tact and taste as if she had been present at the above dialogue.

The sombre black was so exquisitely relieved by delicate surroundings that Viola presented rather the aspect of one who preferred the sable attire from choice rather than actual mourning for the dead.

And Viola, if she did bestow much attention on her lovely self—in its reflection—did perhaps murmur:

"Perhaps he is not dead; but no, no, it must be."

Only one cherished, trifling circumstance fed the spark of hope in her mind.

Mrs. Hoyte had uttered one brief sentence: "Miss Devaux, till Mike tells you all is lost don't despair, and he is not here yet to speak that word."

"But, how—what—perhaps he is lost also," said Viola, sadly.

And Mrs. Hoyte's lips were firmly set, as if to contradict the reply that the poor girl wished to read in her eyes.

How could she hang any firm dependence on such a vague and slender cord as the assurance of one so accustomed to the daring risks encountered by the mysterious Mike that she believed he could never come to harm?

Still Viola did remember and try to conjure up the look and accent of the woman as she spoke, but yet her true instinct forbade her buoying herself with such dangerous and delusive hope even under the pressure that was put on her by her unscrupulous guardian.

There was a lovely pensive look in her eyes and a soft refinement in her delicate features that gave an inexpressible charm to her whole aspect, which certainly more than rivalled the more brilliant and untouched beauty of Pauline.

For, probably, on account of the shock having fallen rather on the nerves than the frame the girl had lost little of her loveliness during her late sufferings; and now she appeared to be waking out of a sad dream to renewed power of exertion and enjoyment.

Then as the two girls placed themselves in the handsome carriage provided for them, two more attractive creatures could scarcely have been side by side in any capital of Europe; and so Paul Leclerc too well knew. The distance to the Florentine gallery was not great, but sufficient to bring a slight bloom to Pauline's cheeks, and some animated interest to Viola's eyes, as they traversed the beautiful streets with their novel tenants and the spectacles they afforded.

No wonder then, as they stepped from the vehicle and prepared to mount the marble staircase, a gentleman appeared fairly fascinated beyond the usual admiration by the young "Inglese."

His dress and much of his aspect would denote him to be an Italian, or, at least, a native of some warmer region than England.

He was not young, certainly of full middle age, though not one trace of decay mingled with the mature dignity that his years gave him.

His eyes had a keen but yet melancholy penetration in them, that gave a peculiar attraction to their expression.

His features were well defined and cut in a mould that is seldom seen, save in a race that has transmitted through long generations its high intellectual type.

Such was the stranger who thus stood rivetted as it were by the attractions of Mr. Leclerc's charges as they walked deliberately along the passages to the splendid gallery of the Medici.

He attended them at a respectful distance, his gaze still earnestly rivetted on the party.

Viola saw him—she marked his every action and glance, with a strange interest in his proceedings for which she could not account.

Was it a fancy—a delusion; or did his eyes rest sadly and tenderly on hers in preference to her companion?

She was not wont to be vain, and yet she could not resist the impression that such was the fact.

Perhaps this certainly gave her an unusual interest in the individual, but it was yet evidently shared by Mr. Leclerc, who had more than once gave half questioning, half inviting looks at the fellow spectator of the rare paintings.

At length they were arrested before a splendid picture of Paul Veronese.

A picture of wondrous beauty: a group of a martyr to the faith, and gazed at by one as true perhaps but more helpless than the hero of the picture.

It was easy to divine the story.

The bold, calm confessor—the sad, weeping, shrinking wife; the stern Inquisitors, who adjudged the crime of heresy, were vivid and unmistakable pictures of the characters thus depicted.

Viola was transfixed before the painting.

Mr. Leclerc viewed it with stern attention.

And Pauline rather shrank from than admired and appreciated the subject delineated.

Suddenly Viola was startled by a voice near her—a voice rich, full and mellow, that seemed not altogether unfamiliar.

It addressed her in the Italian tongue, as if certain that it was understood by the listener.

"You admire it, what is your sentiment of its subject?" was the question put.

Viola turned round to meet the strangely tender gaze of the same person she had remarked at the portal.

"I have but poor Italian," she answered, in accents that well became the liquid tongue; "but it seems to me an expressive, well-conceived painting. I am interested in it."

The gentleman smiled gently.

"You need not fear your abilities," he said; "you speak fairly well. And for the picture, it is a brave conception."

"And very real," she returned, quickly.

"You are young to think so," he added, in a low tone. "You must have known sorrow."

Then at the instant Mr. Leclerc and Pauline came nearer to them and the stranger addressed them in English, that, however correct, had a slight foreign accent in it.

"You are strangers here, signor?" he asked.

"We are, and you doubtless a native," was the reply.

"No, only naturalised, though I may perhaps claim some kindred here," he replied. "But it seems to me that it is but a right and kindly thing to assist foreigners in such a case, and I will only be too happy to be of any service to you and these ladies. I am tolerably well known here. My name is Count Antoine di Serrano, and my hotel is not in any unknown quarter of this fair city."

Mr. Leclerc bowed graciously.

"And I in turn should give you some account of myself, count," he answered. "I have no title to boast, but I have an English name of no mean origin, and a tolerable position in my country. My name and home is on this card, and my object in coming hither is to bring health to my only daughter after a great sorrow that has shaken her to the centre."

"Your only daughter? Then this young lady is?"

"My ward," was the brief reply. "Miss Devaux."

"And you mean to winter here?" asked the stranger.

"I hope so."

"I am glad. It will give me a chance of becoming acquainted with you and yours, signor. I am alone in the world. Every tie is broken, and, as a rule, I am slow in forming others," said the count, with a sigh.

Viola looked with some suspicion and yet an irrepressible interest on the stranger.

It was singular perhaps for him to thus volun-

teer such advances to complete strangers at once to himself and his real and adopted country.

Yet his tone and manner was so sincere and natural when speaking of his lonely condition that it touched her heart and made her ashamed of her distrust.

She waited eagerly for the next remark that her guardian might volunteer.

And, as it happened, it more than realised her wish for information.

"You have no wife or child, then, I presume, count," he said; "that is well nigh my own case. I have lost a wife, and this is my only child, and she has been well nigh snatched from me by a great sorrow," he added, glancing at Pauline.

"You are right, sir. I have no such ties," responded the count, gravely.

Then, after a slight pause, he resumed:

"I will show you some of the more famous pictures if you will allow me. It saves much needless time and fatigue to know exactly what to examine first."

Mr. Leclerc assented gratefully, and then a less personal conversation followed.

The count proved an excellent cicerone.

This attention was certainly directed ostensibly to Mr. Leclerc and his daughter.

Yet Viola had an instinctive feeling that his keen, penetrating eyes were really directed to herself as he pointed out the various chef-d'œuvres of the old masters.

It might be from curiosity as to her identity, or that she appeared to take more interest in his descriptions, but she was certain that it was so.

And when at last the brief cursory survey was finished she was not altogether sorry to perceive his next move in the game of this first introduction.

"Mr. Leclerc, I see you are fond of pictures, and as your invalid may not be able to bear much fatigue I would venture to propose that you should honour me with a visit to my poor hotel. I have some few—very few gems I should like to show you, and it would be less fatiguing than a more prolonged visit to these galleries."

Mr. Leclerc thanked the count with a slight restraint that was evidently perceived by the stranger.

"I can give you ample reference as to my rank and position here," he resumed, with a sarcastic smile. "I am no adventurer whom you might fear to present to your charges, nor am I young enough for any dangerous designs."

Viola looked involuntarily at him. There was a wonderful youthfulness in his expression and aspect when that flash crossed his grave features.

He was undoubtedly handsome and aristocratic enough to cover the maturity of his actual years even in the eyes of a young girl.

And Miss Devaux had an uneasy impression that some secret worked under that polished exterior, which Mr. Leclerc did not appear for an instant to suppose.

"Do not do me the injustice to think that I could doubt you, count, but of course a formal introduction might place us completely at ease as to our respective positions. Perhaps we may have mutual acquaintances in the town," he replied, with an apologetic tone.

The count placed a card in his hand.

"I fancy you will find that name is pretty well known, Mr. Leclerc. I shall have the pleasure of calling on you if you will give me your address, and that will put us on a more correct footing as to visiting etiquette."

Again there was a touch of sarcastic bitterness in the count's manner to the fine ear of Viola Devaux.

But she was perhaps too fanciful in her perceptions since the late terrible tragedy.

Her guardian exchanged cards with him.

"We are always visible in the evening, count. The rest of the day is generally spent in sight-seeing and repose."

The dialogue ended here as far as any actual arrangement was concerned.

The carriage was gained, and the adieux made with the usual courtesy.

Then it drove rapidly off.

The Count Antoine stood looking after it so long as one shadow of it was in sight.

Then he hastily turned away and walked rapidly to his own splendid palazzo.

He did not give way in the slightest degree to his feelings so long as there was a chance of a domestic even witnessing his agitation.

Then, as he gained his own chamber, he said to himself in a hoarse voice that scarcely breathed the words distinctly:

"Yes, at last—at last! Can it be? Am I so happy, and yet so wretched? Alas—alas! am I so entirely—so continually to be a victim to the past, never to be recalled? Can I never atone—never be forgiven?"

And casting himself on a chair he remained in deep and motionless thought till the loud clang of the bells of one of the neighbouring churches warned him of the lapse of time.

He shook off his gloom and walked to an inner door that led from his chamber, and which opened on a short passage that was scarcely more than an opening in the thick wall wide enough to contain a tall form, and revealed another wall on the opposite side of the passage that, however, had apparently no answering door.

Yet he vanished through some secret and unperceived outlet, and again found himself in a small apartment which opened on another and larger chamber.

This apartment was spacious and well-furnished for an Italian palazzo, which is proverbially comfortable when compared with our own luxurious appointments, so far as domestic appliances are concerned.

This saloon, as it might be called, was not tenantless.

It contained an individual whose appearance was scarcely to be described, since the face and figure were half concealed by enveloping wraps and a luxuriant crop of hair, whiskers, and moustache that effectually shaded the features.

(To be Continued.)

THE QUEEN AND MRS. STAUNTON.

We learn that on the Sunday preceding the Tuesday, the day fixed for the execution of the Stauntons, the mother of the two men travelled alone to Balmoral, in order to obtain an interview with the Queen and beseech clemency for her wretched sons. On reaching Ballater, after leaving Aberdeen, the last station, some twelve miles from Balmoral, the poor woman sought some conveyance to take her the remainder of the journey. Nothing could be obtained, and the people, on hearing the melancholy mission of the unfortunate mother, showed their sympathy by obtaining for her a seat on the mail bag in the little cart, which contained only one small seat for the driver. The mail bag was thrown into the cart, and the poor woman was allowed to seat herself upon it. So she travelled through the cold and dismal night the twelve dreary miles to Balmoral.

On reaching the Castle, the next and formidable difficulty that met her was obtaining an audience of the Queen. After explaining the object of her journey to the attendants, she at last obtained an interview with Sir Thomas Bid-dulph, who, after patiently listening to what she had to say, promised to let the Queen immediately know the object of her being at the Castle. With little delay, the Queen, setting aside all etiquette and formality, entered the apartment in which Mrs. Staunton was seated, and with a true Sovereign's and woman's heart listened to the appeal and humble prayer for mercy, and that the lives of her children might be spared. The Queen, no doubt with an aching heart, could only explain that she was entirely in the hands of her responsible Minister.

The painful interview ended, the petitioner, grateful for the condescension and sympathy of her Sovereign, sought now to return to Ballater, heart-broken that the last hope of saving her wretched sons had failed her. The servants inquired how she intended getting back the twelve miles to Ballater. There was no conveyance, and

they plainly saw the poor woman was quite incapable of walking the distance. Again the Queen was informed of the circumstances, and with that consideration so characteristic of her nature, she ordered that one of her own carriages should be got ready to take Mrs. Staunton back.

Scarcely had the poor woman left the Castle, when the mail bag containing her Majesty's letters and despatches was opened, and, to the gratification and relief of the Queen, the Home Secretary's despatch recommending the reprieve was amongst the number. The poor mother went on her way back, worn out and dejected. With the instinct of kindness and charitable feeling, the Queen at once instructed a special messenger to proceed on horseback and take the glad tidings to her sister in sorrow. Such deeds require no comment, but raise the Monarch to the highest eminence.

Mrs. Staunton, on reaching Ballater, was instantly informed of the glad tidings, and that the mail bag on which she had sat with a bleeding heart, contained the reprieve which she had travelled so many miles to obtain. Such is a simple account of an episode in the life of the Queen, well harmonising with all that her subjects already know of her.

WATER SUPPLY AT WATERING PLACES.

CONTINUING its report on this subject, the "Sanitary Record" finds that the Eastbourne supply has the advantage of great organic purity, whilst the Brighton water is better than any sample analysed, except that of Dover. Considering the large number of visitors to London-super-Mare it is highly satisfactory to find them so well provided for in this important respect. Cromer, a watering-place rapidly growing into importance, is wretchedly supplied, with, in this case, the impure element. It is described as of a yellow green colour, with very offensive smell and nauseous taste, swarming with animalculæ, and in fact concentrated but fairly oxidised sewage. We should imagine, says the same authority, teetotalism does not flourish at Cromer, and that Good Templers would certainly not choose it for their holiday resort. Worthing has a good water-supply, but at Littlehampton it was found to be full of suspended matter, containing not only living organisms in abundance, but pieces of skin and fibre, and an excessive proportion of organic remains of every kind. The water at Bognor seems to be in a very similar state.

POOR LOO.

By the Author of "Dan's Treasure," "Clitby Cranbourne," "The Golden Bowl," etc.

CHAPTER L.

MET ONCE AGAIN.

How beautiful this night! the balmy sigh
Which vernal zephyrs breathe in evening's ear
Were discord to the speaking quietude
Which wraps this changeless scene. SHELLEY.

FOUR days have passed since Loo was admitted on bail to walk free from the shackle of locks and gaolers, but with the dread of them hanging before, and again we find her on the sea-shore.

Since that never to be forgotten day she has shrank from meeting the eyes of her fellow-creatures, and has refused to leave the house in the daylight, thereby disappointing some hundreds of people who have flocked down to Little Bampton to see her.

For this little watering place is by no means difficult of access from London, and the fame of the beauty of the fair prisoner, the rank of the prosecutrix, and the mystery that surrounded

the girl's parentage, had their found way into the daily papers, news being scarce at this particular time, and as judgment and sympathy were all in Loo's favour, Lady Travers may have been said to have woken up one morning and found herself infamous.

Notoriety however was just the thing that to Loo was most horrible, and thus, her longing to walk on the shore could only be gratified when the sun had gone down.

The shingle is not a favourite resort at this time of the year, and though the moon has risen and is bathing with its silvery light both sea and earth with a tender radiance, it has tempted no one but the miserable girl to come down to the water's edge, and she, unperceived, has slipped out of the house alone.

Why, she might not like to tell you, but the truth is, that Robert Marker has arrived; she has heard his voice, and his name pronounced, though she has not yet seen him, and she shrinks from doing so, for is he not Mabel's lover.

Are the two not now together? forgetful of her? Doubting, blaming her, perhaps; at any rate knowing nothing of her grief in their own happiness, and she is here alone. A wail and a stray. Belonging to no one—owned by no one.

All the misery of her life has crowded upon the girl at this hour. To whom does she belong? Why is she living? standing upon the fair earth and having no part or lot in it, without even a name that she can make any legal claim to.

That wicked old woman had called her "base born;" what could she mean by that? Loo did not know, her mind had been kept singularly pure, and clean, and innocent of the world's wickedness, and the misery that sin always entails, and Mabel had so guarded her, had so warded off and stood as a shield between the girl and the distinct knowledge of evil, that, though many things had puzzled they had passed by without soiling her.

Now, the moon's cold sheen, the chilling winds, and her own misery seemed to overwhelm the girl, and she sat down on the shingle, leaned against one of the breakwaters, and felt as though life were no longer worth having, and she could remain here till the tide came in and covered her.

She was too heart-sick even for tears to come to her eyes, and here, barely seventeen, she sat, feeling life had nothing more to offer her.

How long she thus remained it would be difficult to say, but she was cold and cramped and seemed as though she had been asleep when a light hand touched her, and she looked up with a dull start to see a lady before her, the one whom she had noticed walking about muffled in shawl and veil, and about whom she had woven so many fancies.

The veil was thrown from her face now, a face young and very lovely, but oh, so sad, clearly defined, and every line intensified in the white moonlight and Loo, roused from her stupor, forgot her own grief in looking at her.

"My poor girl, are you ill?" asked the stranger's voice in a gentle tone, and with the accent of a cultured lady.

"No," was the reply, "except in mind."

And Loo rose to her feet, and thus these two girls, who as children had slept side by side, whose destinies had been so twisted and tangled, stood looking at each other, the daughter of Lady Alice Fitz-Howard Hill, and of Suma the half-caste.

This was where the girl who had believed herself the heiress of Drayton Abbey had taken refuge, not more than a dozen miles from the quiet sea-side place where Lady Elizabeth had a house, and spent two months of each year, but it offered the advantage of the steamers to the Channel Islands and French coast, and at the sound of warning or idea that she had been pursued she could start at an hour's notice by one of them, and defy Lady Elizabeth to bring her back again.

Like Loo, she had been "brooding over misery's eggs" until seeing a creature of her own sex apparently more wretched than herself,

and sitting where the tide, when it came in, might overtake her, she had, as it were, gone out of herself to address her.

As the moonlight shone upon Loo's face, however, she started.

Had one of the portraits walked down from the walls of Drayton Abbey to confront her?

And that portrait, too, the one that till recently she had believed to be of her own mother!

She could scarcely believe what her own eyes showed her; she thought she must be dreaming, and she said, strangely:

"Forgive me. I thought it was a poor girl who had fallen asleep, and don't think me impertinent, but can your name be Fitz-Howard Hill?"

"No," said Loo, drearily, carried away by the ghostlike aspect which the moon had thrown upon all before her, and the sad, lovely face of the lady, who, darker than herself, seemed some years older. "I have no name, or if I have, I do not know it; I am called Lucile Travers, but it by law belongs to me no more than to you."

"And yet—" and Lizzie stopped herself, and added, "I thought no woman who was innocent of wrongdoing could be more wretched than I am, but your face tells me I am mistaken. I am quite alone and very helpless and powerless, but can I help you?"

"No, thank you," replied Loo; "it is very ungrateful of me, for I have kind friends who love me very dearly, but I am unhappy. I came out here to sit and think and I must have fallen asleep."

"If the knowledge that others suffer more than yourself can lessen your own pain, as I have heard, though never found it," said Lizzie, bitterly, "take comfort, for I am without one friend in the wide world, and those who love me most I must hide from. Don't you think my grief surpasses yours?"

"Indeed it does, can I help you? Not that I can do much," wearily.

"No one, can help me," bitterly; "I am past help; the weakness and folly of others and a perverse destiny has put me in a false position from my cradle, it will carry me on to my grave, which I hope may not be far distant. I don't know why I talk like this to you," she added, "but there seems some link between us; when I first saw your face the odd idea struck me that you are the girl whose place through life I have unwittingly taken: but it is absurd, improbable. I am full of fancies to-night. I feel as though some strange change were awaiting me, as though the past, with all its shadows and sunshine, were passing away for ever. It is strange. Good-night."

And she turned away while Loo gazed, with a longing to follow and comfort her, yet not knowing what to say, simply murmured, "Good-night," and watching the figure as it walked along in the direction of the harbour and pier, herself again sank down in her sheltered nook by the wooden piles.

The moonlight changed and became fitful, clouds drifted about, the wind rose, and the sea became troubled with the prelude of a storm, the elements were giving notice of their approaching strife, and Loo was about to rise from her resting place and retrace her steps to the house which Mabel and she now occupied, when she heard footsteps, the voices of two men talking, and her heart seemed to stand still and pause in its pulsations from very terror, for the voice of one of the men was that of Herbert Dorset, while the other evidently belonged to a rough seaman.

Oh, the dread horror of that moment!

Had she not dreamed it all? Had she not seen this very place, had she not come away from Spa to escape it? and, lo, it was before her! Flight was useless, struggling was vain!

The dead hopelessness of despair came over her heart and soul; her limbs were useless and would not obey her will even if she had felt equal to trying to exert it, and she had just the instinct of fear strong enough to make her shrink still closer to the friendly shelter of the boards against which she had been leaning.

Had the moon been shining on her as it was ten minutes ago she must have been discovered, but a cloud obscured its brightness; the howling of the wind covered her almost noiseless breathing, and the two men passed so close to her hiding place that the loose pebbles that their feet displaced rolled down to her side and made her think they were touching her.

She held her breath. It had come at last; she heard Herbert Dorset's voice say:

"I saw her go over there; no noise, mind, we must take her without a cry."

Then, could it be possible? they passed on, and she, panting, trembling, scarcely daring to breathe, pressed her soft cheek on the cold hard stones and prayed mutely that she might be spared from the terrible fate which but a moment before seemed to threaten her.

It must have been some time after this when a hand was laid on her shoulder, and Robert Marker's voice said:

"Loo, my child, you must be very cold here, come, let me wrap this shawl round you and take you home."

Her only reply was a flood of tears; her nerves were shaken; she felt like one who had drifted back from the very threshold of "that borne whence no traveller returns."

CHAPTER LI.

"I LOVE YOU."

The night shall be filled with music,
And the cars that infest the day
Shall fold their tents like the Arabs,
And as silently steal away. LONGFELLOW.

WHEN Loo heard Robert Marker's voice before leaving the house where she and Mabel were staying, he had, as she rightly guessed, but just arrived.

A succession of accidents had delayed his coming to them. The telegram sent to Spa he had not as we have seen received, the one sent to his professional residence in London had, it is true, been delivered at the house, but the servant who took it in accidentally threw the envelope containing it on the fire and never discovered her blunder till it was too late to retrieve it, when she came to the conclusion that discretion was by far the better part of valour, and consequently held her tongue on the subject.

Thus it was that until he saw the account of the matter in the morning paper he not only had no idea that Loo and Mabel wanted him, but did not even know where they were.

To arrange his professional business so that he could leave town for a few hours, or even days, was the next step, and then he set off for Little Bampton as fast as horses and steam could take him.

"So you have come at last!" said Miss Travers, coldly, as he was ushered into her presence; "very kind and thoughtful of you, I am sure. I have had some sharp lessons in the last few days, and but for my bitter experience should have staked my life upon your sincerity and not only willingness but desire to stand by Loo."

"And what has caused you to change your opinion?" demanded the surgeon, in no slight degree astonished.

"Can you ask such a question when I have telegraphed for you both to London and Spa, and now, when days and days have elapsed, you walk in as though nothing on earth had happened. It was so unlike you that had I heard you were dead I should not have been surprised, but to walk in unconcerned and in good health as you are does astonish me."

"I think I have the most right to be astonished," was the reply. "I have neither received a letter or telegram. I called at your house at Notting Hill and found you had gone away without leaving an address behind, and the next I hear is from a newspaper two days old which by accident I had picked up in the house of a patient while waiting to see him; that was this morning. You may imagine that I have lost no time when I am here now and at your service."

"You have not received my telegrams?" asked Mabel, doubtfully. "I cannot understand

it. I sent them off from the office myself; this must be inquired into; but now I am glad you have come, for something must be done at once or we shall lose Loo."

"Lose her," repeated Robert Marker, blankly, "what can you mean? This charge against her can never be sustained; any sensible magistrate would have dismissed it at once. It is very painful, but it will be over soon; there is no real danger about it."

"Perhaps not; but there are other things: people have learnt through this that she does not belong to me—that she has no legal name and status, and there are those I know who are trying to claim her and get her from me. There is Captain Speke, for instance; he has been a thorough good friend to us—we almost owe it to him that Loo is not in prison now; but his son told me his father thought he recognised Loo as the child he had once engaged to take care of, and he is trying to make his claim out; no doubt he thinks she would make a nice wife for his son."

"And you object to him as a suitor?" with an admirable amount of self-restraint.

"I don't know that I do" carelessly, "except that I should lose her. But that is not all: the child is ill with anxiety and fretting; if we cannot rouse her she will settle the whole question by dying. Since that dreadful day she has never been out in the daylight for fear people should see and recognise her, and she wanders about the shore at night alone unless I keep her company."

"But do you allow her to go out alone at night? Is it not dangerous? There may be bad characters about."

"Oh, no; she is safe enough. A cry from the sands would almost reach us here. It is not that, but the terrible effect upon her mind that my aunt's wickedness has produced, and also she feels that she has no legal footing in the world—no name that she can call her own. Of course if her friends claim her this may change. But we shall lose her entirely. The loss may not be much to you, it will be all the world to me."

"Not much to me!" repeated Robert Marker with half-suppressed excitement. "You can never know what she is to me. I am foolish, I know, for I am nearly old enough to be her father, and she is such a child that it would be unfair to take advantage of her ignorance and innocence. But I shall never marry, unless Loo is my wife; so you may suppose what she is to me."

"Then what do you propose to do?" asked Mabel.

"What do you advise?"

"Nay, I cannot advise you. Loo is young, but many women are married at her age. Not that I should like her to marry for years to come, if I were sure of keeping her with me; but I am not. You are not very old"—with a smile—"indeed, for my child's sake, I should not like you to be younger. It is just the question as to what Loo herself feels. I think you and I would both consider her happiness before our own."

"Most certainly. Do you think I should ask her if she will marry me? Do you think it possible that she can love me? I should never forgive myself—I would rather put my right hand in the fire than ask her, for my sake, to take a step that may for her entail a life-long repentance!"

"You are quite right. Still, if Loo should care more for you than either of us imagine, as much as you hope, it would be almost an additional wrong to her to remain silent. I know she has a great affection for you, more I cannot say. You have my best wishes, if they are worth anything," with a frank smile.

"Well, what is that verse?"

He either fears his fate too much
Or his desert is small,
Who will not put it to the touch,
And win or lose it all.

So I will tell Loo what my feelings and hopes are, and if she consults you, pray let her happiness be our first and only consideration; the greatest wrong that she could inflict upon herself or me would be to mistake gratitude for



[“BY THE SAD SEA WAVES.”]

love, and to wake up one day to face the error she had made. Where is she? May I see her?”

Mabel rang the bell, but the servant who answered it said Miss Lucile had gone out more than an hour ago, directly after the gentleman arrived.

“She will be down on the sands,” observed Mabel without concern, “but she has been there quite long enough; she will be getting a cold. Perhaps you had better go and meet her. You will find her between this and the pier—to the right. The tide is coming in and the wind is rising. We shall have rain and a storm before morning. I won’t come with you,” she added, but don’t be long. It is too cold for the child to be out.”

And with a bright smile:

“A warm drawing-room will be more comfortable, though not so romantic, as a wind-driven shore.”

And then Robert Marker went out to seek the girl whom he wished to make his wife.

He was long before he found her, and then, as we know, she was so weak and helpless, that he had to take her in his arms and soothe her, as he had done when a child, before she sufficiently recovered to speak calmly and gently withdraw herself from his protecting arm.

“Loo, what is the matter, my pet? Didn’t you know that I had come to see you?”

“Yes,” she replied, slowly, “but I thought you wanted to talk to Mabel.”

“Of course I did; but I wanted to see you. What! are you not glad that I have come?”

“Yes; but doesn’t Mabel want you? I will come in soon. I have been frightened. Herbert Dorset is here. He is looking for me.”

She trembled.

“Do you think I shall ever be safe from him?” she added with a shudder. “He seems always to haunt me like an evil shadow, when I am most miserable.”

“Safe from him! Yes, my darling, quite safe from him, if you think you can love me well enough to be my wife!”

“Your wife!” and the girl started back in terror; were the horrors of this night never to be over?

Her brain seemed to reel. All the world must be going mad. What would Mabel say if she could hear him?

Did he think so meanly of her as to believe she would try to fling the love that belonged to the woman who had been more than a mother to her?

The very magnitude of the possible crime nerved her with strength and energy, and she said in a tone which she never thought to have used to this man who had saved her life and rescued her from an existence of poverty, perhaps of crime:

“You seem to forget yourself, Mr. Marker; what do you think Mabel would say if she were to hear you?”

“Mabel,” with a happy laugh; “she sent me to ask you; nothing would give her greater happiness.”

But the girl shook her head; she was not convinced.

“Impossible,” she said. “Mabel would sacrifice her life as well as her happiness for me as I would mine for her; but you belong to Mabel: you love her, or you used to, and she loves you, and I shall go away, and in your happiness you will both forget me.”

And she turned to go, she knew not whither, certainly not towards the house that she had left.

But a new light had come into Robert Marker’s face, though the darkness that had now set in hid it; a great hope had sprung up in his heart, and he exclaimed, eagerly:

“Loo, you are quite mistaken; if Mabel and I had cared for each other except as brother and sister we should have married years ago, if only to have silenced that wicked old woman, Lady Travers, and to have taken care of you more securely; but we did not. There is no woman living whom I esteem more than I do Mabel Travers; but, Loo, I love you; Mabel knows it, and approves of it; but I am thirty-six. Can

you care for a man almost old enough to be your father?”

“It is not that; it is Mabel,” objected the girl. “I cannot be mistaken, that Russian count told me so.”

“The little scoundrel. But if you don’t believe me come and hear for yourself, for Mabel sent me out to fetch you.”

“You mean what you say?” she asked; “you are not deceiving yourself and me?”

“Loo! Did I ever deceive you? Have you a right, much as I love you, to talk to me like this?”

“No. And I—I do love you.”

There was silence for a moment as their lips met in the first long kiss of love.

A silence broken by a man’s voice at their side saying:

“Lizzie, is this your faith and love for me?”

“What do you mean? You are mistaken,” said the surgeon.

“No, I am not. I came to find this lady. Lizzie, you know me; surely you have not forgotten the voice of Donald Duncan.”

“Indeed, I have not the pleasure of knowing you,” replied Loo; “nor is my name Lizzie.”

“I beg your pardon,” in evident dismay. “I was told the lady I sought was walking on the sands alone. You are about the same height as she, and the darkness led me into error. May I ask if you have seen her? I am told she has walked about this place at odd times for the last week or ten days, and always alone.”

“Yes,” said the girl; “she passed me less than half an hour ago, and went towards the pier.”

“Thank you,” and Lord Duncan, whom you have no doubt recognised, hurried off in the direction indicated.

And Loo, leaning on the arm which she was now beginning to realise was henceforth to be her own, walked back to be embraced and congratulated by Mabel.

While Lizzie went forward to meet her fate.

(To be Continued.)



[TERRIBLE TIDINGS.]

THE LOVE PACT.

CHAPTER XIII.

As on the slayer's track the hound
With foot untired speeds sternly on,
Clears the dark ravine with fierce bound,
Nor rests until his quarry's won:
So did I track my hated foe
Through summer heat, through winter snow.
DE FIERRES.

It was the day preceding the festival of Noël, as Christmas Day is termed on the other side of the Channel, where however it does not receive the place and honour accorded to it by the English race, the Gaul reserving his more subdued merrymaking for New Year's Day—le jour de l'an—which is the grand occasion for the exchange of friendly hospitalities, hearty greetings, and abundant presents in all ranks of society.

Far and wide round the Château D'Aubriion the snow lay thickly. Very few were those who cared to face the keen wind which swept over the white wastes, for the labour of the countryman was stopped, and the French sportsman does not care to endure the winter rigours of which his hardier English brother makes light.

Yet, inclement as was the day, and early as was the hour, three persons were already astride, before even the domestics of the château had reluctantly quitted their warm beds.

These three persons were the Marquis D'Aubriion, Georges Grandet, and Jacques Cochart.

Georges had fulfilled his mission. He had been to England, had found Captain Mostyn just escaped from the life-in-death trance which had bound him, he had partaken for some days of the hospitality of Mostyn Manor, and had finally returned to make his report to the master of D'Aubriion.

It was with very mingled feelings that he did so. The dandy had seen Captain Mostyn on his visit to France, and, although the two men were so entirely dissimilar in everything, the Parisian

took a strong liking for the stalwart soldier. He would have been however more than human if he had not experienced some degree of satisfaction when he learned of Hugh Mostyn's mishap and the opening thus probably left to him to win Hélène's heart—perhaps even, if he could but overcome his uncle's disparaging ideas, obtain her hand.

Georges therefore departed for the English capital in the unconfessed hope that the captain was a doomed man, and when he learned of his complete recovery the intelligence was most unwelcome.

But in the frank intercourse which ensued, short though it was, the Parisian found that his original liking for Hugh Mostyn grew into esteem and strong friendship. Feeble fop as the marquis deemed Georges, he had a true heart, and under the frivolities of a man of fashion hid feelings honourable to any son of Adam.

Hugh Mostyn on his part reciprocated the liking. Accustomed as was the soldier to deal with many men in the freedom of the camp, the bivouac, and the battlefield, alike with the resorts of fashion and ton, he was able to read with a practised insight the hearts of those with whom he had to do. So between the two young men a friendship was formed.

Despite the efforts of Captain Mostyn to fulfil the part of a host attentive to the wants and pleasures of an honoured guest, he could not throw off the gloom which oppressed him. Hugh Mostyn was not a man to "wear his heart upon his sleeve," and Georges Grandet had the reticence characteristic of a man of good society, yet it could not but be that they each touched on some occasions upon the subject so near to the dandy's heart; and the Frenchman could easily discern from slight clue that, although Hugh Mostyn might wish loyally to obey his father's mandate, yet nevertheless he did not love Hélène D'Aubriion—nay, more, that his heart was buried in an unknown grave and he would never love woman again.

The Parisian returned with his report. The marquis evinced a grave satisfaction that the

match on which his heart was set would become ere long an accomplished fact.

The marchioness shook her head sadly, and Hélène, who had learned from her cousin the disinclination of Hugh Mostyn for the union, was quietly hopeful that she might yet escape it.

But although thus far matters had taken a turn to suit his wishes the marquis did not seem happy. His days were often given to solitary meditations, his nights broken by ill dreams and anxious thoughts.

It was understood that Georges should remain a guest over the festive time.

Jacques Cochart was a guest also.

From the day on which Georges had left for England until now the notary had not been absent from the château. He had pleaded severe illness consequent on his injuries at the tower. Doctors had been called in, and, although they could not understand the symptoms, they considered it was not safe for the notary to travel. He had therefore conducted his extensive business by deputy, and remained at D'Aubriion, often not leaving his chamber for days together, and when he appeared in the family circle sedulously avoiding the exchange of more than the commonest expressions of civility with Hélène.

But, wary as a fox, sharp-eyed as a lynx, Cochart let nothing escape him.

On the preceding evening he had heard the marquis declare that he must be absent for a day and found that he had given orders for the carriage to be ready in order to catch an early train.

It so happened that as the marquis made this statement both Georges and the notary were present.

The young man was at the moment attentively watching the haggard, immobile face of Cochart. Few emotions had power to move these wrinkled features, but Georges caught a strange, irrepressible glance of satisfaction which shot from the grey-green eyes of the notary at the marquis's remark.

Slight as was this token, it was sufficient to put the young man on the alert.

Thus it was that on this bitter morning the effeminate Parisian exquisite was up and dressed before any other dweller in the château.

He stood at his window, peeping through the heavy curtains at the hard, white expanse of the park with a little affected shudder while he formed his plans.

With a start of surprise he noted a black, moving object afar off on the snow.

It moved swiftly, and hugged the high hedge, in the direction away from the château.

To a man whose suspicions are high-strung the slightest indication is not to be neglected. He is all eye, all ear, like a Red Indian on the trail or the war-path.

Georges stepped back to his dressing-table and took from one of his many travelling cabinets of fashionable nick-nacks a small but extremely powerful pair of field-glasses.

Returning to the window, he placed them to his eyes, carefully adjusted the focus, and after a short inspection turned from the window and executed a gavotte of rather exaggerated character expressive of great delight.

"Bien!" he said, "I am right. It is well, my old fox. I hold now the clue. It shall go hard with me if I do not soon unravel the web."

The little, distant, rapidly moving speck was the form of the invalid notary whose life hung on a thread.

The dandy turned to his dressing-case and portmanteau and made several changes in his attire, then from one or two pistol-cases he brought forth a tiny pair of pistols richly inlaid with silver, and loaded them very carefully with ball.

"Tis as well to be prepared," he said, reflectively. "And if it should prove to be necessary I'll back lead against the cold steel at any odds. Is it not so, Cochart, mon ami? Ha! ha!"

And he laughed a little quiet laugh.

Then he opened his room door and peered out cautiously, looked at his splendid Breguet to ascertain the time, lighted a tiny cigarette from the waxen taper of a girandole, and stepped lightly as a cat down the stairs.

The soft, luxurious carpet gave forth no response to his light footfall, and in a few moments he let himself out by a side door and reached the tables.

Although an old officer of the First Empire, the marquis was an Anglophile of the purest water, and, despite his sneers at his nephew's love for the turf, the old noble's coachman and groom were both English.

With these men the dandy was a prime favourite. He "tipped" them largely; he could ride and drive well—"like an Englishman" they told him admiringly; he could speak their language well; and, last but not least, he had given them from time to time much-prized information upon current sporting matters in their native land. It was no wonder then that the open-handed, plucky exquisite's coming was always hailed by Joe Dawkins and Bill Desbrow with rejoicing.

Georges found both men in the stable harnessing a splendid pair of greys.

"Desbrow," said the Parisian, "I have a favour to ask of you."

"You do me proud to say so, sir," replied the groom, with a respectful salute. "What is it?"

"When the horses are put to the carriage saddle the chestnut mare and your own horse. We will start directly the carriage rounds the bend of the road. I wish to go by the same train as the marquis unseen by him. So we will follow closely, and you can bring back the horses. Even if he should detect me, you are too much a favourite to fear his anger."

"All right, sir; I'm your man."

"Good. Say nothing to anyone about the place—nor you, Dawkins."

"You may depend on me, sir," responded the coachman. "I'm as close as a fox."

Georges returned to the mansion, slipped in unperceived, and regained his chamber.

It was not long before the marquis descended, partook hastily of his café noir, and some light

edibles, and was soon speeding in his handsome equipage towards the railway station.

Georges was hard on his track.

The three miles which separated the château from the railway were rapidly passed, and as the carriage drew up at the station door Georges threw the reins of his horse to the groom and, springing lightly down, stepped into a thick covert of evergreens which bounded an adjacent garden.

There were very few people on the platform as the marquis came out to be in readiness for the rapidly approaching train, and three only had booked for the same destination.

These were the marquis himself, a hump-backed, bent old man enveloped in a cloak which fell to his very heels and wearing a country-made hat of great breadth of brim, and an old woman attired very plainly in a russet dress and old-fashioned shawl and rustic-looking bonnet with a veil falling partially over her face.

The two latter seemed grievously afflicted. The old man wore huge black goggles to protect his eyes, had his chin swathed in an enormous handkerchief, and coughed heavily at intervals, while he leaned on a stout holly walking-stick.

The woman's face was very pale and her one eye very red as from weeping—a supposition countenanced by her frequent application thereto of a silk handkerchief of rather violent colours, her other eye—or place where it should have been—being covered by a large black patch.

The train drew up, the passengers made the usual hurried selection of carriages, and in a few seconds were under weigh.

On, on, on, past long stretches of snow-coated fields, past mansion and homestead, standing amidst their bare orchard trees, past busy towns with their streets filled with an ever-moving population—on, on, on.

At last a stoppage was made at a droll-looking little station in the heart of Normandy, and the marquis got out from his carriage.

An observer might have noticed as a singular fact that the semi-blind old man and old woman, who had been travelling in different carriages, had been much interested in the appearance of every station they had passed.

At each one their heads had protruded from their respective windows, the black spectacles of the male and the reddened eye of the female scanning right and left with a strange interest.

Each quitted the train at the little Norman station.

It was evident that the Marquis D'Aubrión was expected, for a rather rickety post-chaise awaited him outside the station.

A rough, springless country cart in charge of a red-cheeked urchin, stood close by it, the boy having driven someone over from the village to catch the train.

The marquis gave some audible directions to the postillion and entered the chaise, which immediately rolled off, well nigh up to the nave of the wheels in soft snow.

The man with the goggles looked round despairingly and swore in a subdued tone, but unbroken by the hacking cough with which he had started.

Then he beckoned the boy.

"Can you drive me to Mère Christine's, mon garçon?" he said, in a hoarse voice. "I want to get there quickly and will give you a franc."

The boy opened his eyes with surprise and assent—francs were not plentiful in his pouch.

As he drew up the old woman, in a sharp, quavering voice, proffered the same request, but she desired to go a few rods farther than Mère Christine's, and would also reward him with a franc.

The old man made some objection to the new passenger—he wanted to go quickly, he said, and they would be overlaid.

"No—no!" cried the boy driver, in a panic. "We will speed. The horse is good. Ciel!" he added, in an undertone. "Two francs—'tis a treasure!"

His passengers having placed themselves on the rough seat, the boy belaboured his shaggy pony with such good will that the tough little

animal started at a rate of speed not much less than that of the lumbering chaise still well in view.

They sped on silently—the boy as taciturn as his passengers.

Yet he had information at his tongue's tip which he longed to impart, but dared not ere their destination was well nigh reached, or one gratuity might be risked.

As the quaint winding street came in sight, however, the urchin turned and peered curiously into the old man's black goggles.

"Monsieur wished to see la Mère Christine?" he said, inquiringly. "Eh bien, he will not do that, for she left her home many weeks since."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the man, hoarsely.

"Yes, truly. After la belle Eugénie went away la Mère Christine became sad—ah, so sad and lonesome! And then her brother—Pierre you know at Paris—sent for la mère to come and nurse him, and she left her house and shop in charge of others and went to Paris—Paris! Oh, what joy to go to Paris!"

The boy clapped his red, frost-chapped hands delightedly.

The old man gave a start so violent on hearing the word "Eugénie" that he very nearly threw his aged fellow traveller out of the cart; but immediately after he asked, calmly:

"And whither did Eugénie go?"

"Ah, monsieur, save that she went to England no one knows anything; but we shall learn, we of the village, for we all love la belle, when la Mère Christine comes home."

"How will you of the village know then?"

"There are letters at the post-office—one, two—ah, yes, six—for la Mère Christine; but the postmaster lost her address at Paris and so he must keep them until she comes back. Ah!" he continued, vivaciously. "See! The post-chaise has stopped at the house of la Mère Christine! Ma foi! this is a day of wonders!"

It was strange how intently the purlind ancients stared in the direction indicated.

Could their vision have reached so far, they might have seen the stately form of the marquis enter by the low door the little dwelling, half cottage, half shop.

As the cart rolled near the place the old noble came out with a hasty step and sprang into the waiting vehicle.

It drove on a little farther and stopped at the village post-office, as a question of the old man elicited from the boy.

The next instant the latter drew up his rude vehicle at the house of Mère Christine.

The old man did not seem in any haste to get out, but, after glancing towards the post-office, he at last descended, paid the lad and shambled into the shop.

On rolled the cart until, just beyond the post-office, the old woman stopped it, got out and gave the boy his promised recompense.

It was a strange thing that she should turn round and walk feebly towards the post-office. It was still more strange that the hunchback should appear from Mère Christine's shop door and stumble along towards the same point.

When both had reached it and faced each other—to the manifest annoyance of the old man—it was most strange of all that neither seemed inclined to enter the building or to leave it.

The old man drew a bulky wallet from under his cloak and seemed searching for some papers, the old woman produced a letter and re-read the address, shaking her head meanwhile to and fro.

But both black spectacles and red-rimmed, keen eye were bent, the one at the window, the other at the half-closed door of the office.

"I will give you fifty louis!" came on the ear in a low tone—the voice of the Marquis D'Aubrión!

"I cannot do it, monsieur—it were ruin; and, moreover, I am a man of honour. I cannot violate the trust reposed in me by letting you have the letters."

"Let me at least look at their outsides."

"Bien, that can do no harm."

An interval of silence, then a faint rustle of paper.

"Monsieur! monsieur! you will ruin me—and yourself! Stop! Stop!"
A shuffling of feet was followed by a heavy fall.

The old man drew up to the door and gently pushed it open, the old woman left her station at the window and peered over his shoulder.

Through the open door could be seen the fallen postmaster, still lying where he had been hurled, while nearer to the entrance and with his back towards it stood the Marquis D'Aubron!

One after the other like lightning the old noble tore open some letters which he held in his hands, and at the rapid perusal of the last his face turned ghastly pale, and he pressed his hand convulsively over his left breast.

Then, controlling himself, he said to the postmaster, who, flushed with anger, had now arisen and thrown open the window to summon assistance:

"Idiot! what good would that outcry do? There are the letters. Reread and keep them for a space. I go to find Christine, and she will then claim them. I will keep that promise as I keep this."

And he pressed a bank bill for two hundred and fifty francs into the nerveless hand of the postmaster and was gone.

As he went out the old man entered and asked the official for some stamps. The request had hardly been made ere the old woman came in on a similar errand.

In his excitement the postmaster handed over the stamps with trembling hands, forgetful of the violated letters which the marquis had placed before him.

But when his visitors had left the shop and the man looked round for the objects of his anxiety they had disappeared!

He rushed excitedly to the door—but in vain! Both the man and woman, infirm and old as they were, had also disappeared, and naught but the deserted street met his view!

CHAPTER XIV.

But the portal wavering grows and weak—
The iron yields, the hinges creak—
It bends—it falls—and all is o'er;
The castle can resist no more.

BYRON.

MR. RALPH KESTERTON had made but a very short stay at the mines that morning. As the men were on the strike he could not bully them, and as those placed in authority had no work to oversee he could not harangue them on neglect of duty. Deprived of both these pleasant tasks there was nothing to detain him at the pits.

The newly appointed engineer he had totally ignored on the two occasions of their meeting.

Kesterton reached the Dower House in better spirits than had characterised him of late.

When he first learned of his relation's recovery he gave himself up for lost in a social sense.

If Captain Mostyn took the position which might be expected he would do Rupert Kesterton's occupation would be gone and with it his hopes of winning wealth and the hand of Lady Adeline De Vavassour. But the schemer quickly dismissed any fears he may have entertained on this score.

The settled gloom to which Hugh Mostyn had fallen a victim prevented his active interference to any great extent, and thus far Kesterton had still proved necessary to Lord Thanet.

Mr. Kesterton found the Ladies Vavassour at home. Adeline had just returned from the church of an adjacent village, where she had been assisting the rector and curate to give the finishing touches to the floral decorations for Christmas.

After the first greetings, conversation touched on the approaching season of rejoicing, turned upon the occupants of Mostyn Manor, both mother and daughter expressing their sincere regret at the strange, apathetic state of despair by which the heir of Mostyn appeared to be overwhelmed, then easily branched into speaking of the inaction of the mines.

At that juncture the butler appeared with a look of utter consternation on his face.

"My lady," he said, hurriedly, "something is

wrong. A mob of rough-looking people—pitmen and others—are coming along the private road, as if they intended to make for the Dower House."

Kesterton looked uneasy.

"Indeed, Simmons," replied Lady Vavassour, with a slight intonation of surprise. "Oh, I suppose it is some party of the men out of work taking a direct way through the park to the village. They should not trespass though," she concluded, with a rebuking shake of her head. "Tell them so, Simmons."

"I—I had rather not, my lady—and I think, with your ladyship's permission, I ought to make the house secure. There may be danger!"

"'Danger!' Here! To whom?"

"I think," said the butler, stammeringly. "I think they bear Mr. Kesterton no good will."

At this intimation Rupert Kesterton called to mind some vague hints and some direct threats he had heard, and acknowledged there might be ground for the man's surmise.

"Fasten the doors securely then," said Lady Vavassour, "and put up the shutters of all the rooms save the Puce Room. We can observe these people from there in safety."

The ladies and their guest ascended to the chamber indicated while Simmons and the page bolted and barred the doors and firmly secured the heavy shutters.

In olden days the Dower House had been a place of no inconsiderable strength. In the conflicts of Whig and Jacobite it had seen some smart skirmishes and the olden appliances of defence had been retained as curious relics of a bygone age.

The Puce Room on the upper floor of the two-storeyed mansion directly overlooked the small moat, which also helped to give the house some appearance of a fortress.

The crowd, which numbered between two and three hundred men, came on rapidly. The individuals composing it were rough and frequently brutal-looking men. Only a few were really miners, another few were perhaps artisans of the adjacent town, but at least a moiety was composed of the idle, the dissolute, or the criminal who live by other means than the honest labour of their hands.

Many of the men were armed with formidable bludgeons, and from the pockets of the coarse shooting jacket which one man wore peeped the barrel and stock of a gun taken to pieces.

This man was Jim Meers.

A loud, imperative summons on the door announced the arrival of the gang.

The butler asked their business through the keyhole, and, learning from Meers, who acted as spokesman, that they wished for an interview with Lady Vavassour, temporised with the poacher by the subterfuge that her ladyship was indisposed and could see no one.

Of course the barricaded appearance of the Dower House had not failed to attract the notice of these unwelcome visitors, and Meers shouted out:

"They know what we want, mates, right well, and have made all fast. But the game's in our hands. The old fox is here, and if we stop all his earth holes we can e'en get at him where he breaks cover."

He stationed several of his gang at each door and window and proceeded to circle the mansion.

As they crossed the arch under which the moat passed the one unclosed upper window at which appeared the pale, anxious faces of the two ladies and the sinister visage of Kesterton met their view.

Meers advanced to the edge of the moat and demanded a parley.

Lady Vavassour threw open the window.

"My lady," said the poacher, with a rough obeisance, "don't be frightened. No harm is intended to you or your daughter. But we have come for a little private talk with Mr. Kesterton; and if he'll just step down and oblige us we'll soon be off."

Before Lady Vavassour could reply Rupert Kesterton leaned from the window and answered, in a supercilious manner:

"If any of you fellows want to see me I shall be at the pits on Friday. As for you, Meers, you'll not be taken on again, so it's of no use to offer apologies."

The poacher muttered a deep imprecation.

"Will you come down, sir?" he exclaimed, with a coarse imperativeness.

Kesterton shook his head with a mocking smile.

It was an unfortunate action, exasperating not only the leader but others of the gang.

"Look here!" said a burly ruffian, stepping before Meers. "It's no good wasting time. We mean to have a talk with you, my fine fellow; if we can't do it here we'll pull down the old walls."

Kesterton turned pale. At that moment he realised his danger. Few Englishmen of gentle blood and aristocratic training are cowards, and what man will show the "white feather" before the woman he loves?

"I had better go down, Lady Vavassour," he said. "Inconvenience, or perhaps danger, may accrue to you on my refusal to oblige the vagabonds, and above all things I would prevent that."

The old lady shook her head emphatically.

"No, Mr. Kesterton," she said, in a very determined voice. "It shall never be said that I yielded up a guest to such a danger as may exist here. Vavassour Dower can hold its own, I trow, as it has done ere now against a troop of dragoons."

She was forgetful of the fact that in that day a garrison of stern, fanatic Puritans had showered a deathly rain of leaden bullets on the assailants from each loopholed wall, while now but two men and a lad unarmed and only weak women were the sole garrison.

Kesterton yielded the point, and, stepping forward again, addressed the besiegers.

"I tell you fellows once more that I'll see any deputation that comes to me properly on Friday—except Meers. Now go away, and if you do so at once I won't punish you, as I could under the Riot Act, you know."

There was no movement of the group, but impatient shouts were heard from the men detailed to guard the other sides of the house.

Meers had gone to the rear of the knot of rioters, and, unseen from the house, was screwing his gun together and making preparations to charge it.

"Now go," continued Kesterton, adding, with a liberality induced by fear, "and here's a sovereign to spend for beer amongst you."

He threw the piece of gold with good aim and some violence.

It was fortunate that he did so, for behind the broad-shouldered pitman who had taken the place of Meers as spokesman the latter had slowly elevated the muzzle of his gun until it reached the level of Kesterton's face, when he pulled the trigger.

At that moment the coin struck the would-be murderer sharply between the eyes, causing a slightly involuntary movement of the arm.

The heavy charge of large shot passed just above the head of the object of the poacher's hate and buried itself in a picture on the wall behind him.

Kesterton sprang back a pace, but it was evident he was unhurt.

With the report of the gun broke out the wild passions of one and all.

A shower of heavy flint stones, with which the pockets of most had been provided, fell on the window, smashing not only every pane but much of the stout sashes.

Two of the missiles took other effect. One struck Kesterton heavily on the brow, causing a deep wound, from which the blood streamed freely, while the other fell with equal force on Lady Adeline's soft breast, causing her to stagger backward.

A groan and a smothered imprecation escaped the young man; but with the courage of her old Norman lineage Adeline suppressed all expression of pain, though her face became ashy pale and the white hand pressed against the rich crage indicated the severity of the blow.

Wiping the red stream from his face, Kesterton turned to his hostess.

"Lady Vavassour," he said, with some dignity, "I know not what these ruffians require, but I will dare the worst they can do rather than that you and Lady Adeline shall be endangered. I trust that you have not received severe injury," he continued, turning anxiously to the young lady.

She nerved herself to reply firmly in the negative.

"I will go. Farewell, Lady Vavassour, for the present. Farewell—Adeline!"

It was the first time he had ventured to call her so.

A fresh volley of stones came through the ruined window, from which the occupants of the room had retired, and a clamour of threats and imprecations from many voices—that of the burly ruffian who seemed second in command rising high above the rest.

"Coom out! Thou'lt hide thyself behind the women, thou white-livered cur, wilt thou? Coom out, or it'll be worse for them when we coom in! Coom out and meet thy death like a man. It will na be a quick one, for we'll kick thee to death, mon!"

Kesterton heard the words and gave an involuntary shudder.

"Ay, we'll kick thee to death out here if the open or in their at th' feet o' th' women, and they'll not care to see the sight."

A great tremor came over the spirit of the threatened man. He could have faced some forms of death with something approaching coolness—he had looked calmly at the muzzle of an adversary's pistol in a duel—but this fate, this horrible and gradual process of pain, which should reduce the living, breathing man into a gory and shapeless mass, from which all would turn in shuddering disgust!

It needed not that Lady Vavassour should imperatively forbid Rupert Kesterton to yield himself up—he had no longer any desire to do so—but wiped his wounded forehead in silence, while a strange, cowed look came over his features.

At that instant a loud cracking of timber could be plainly heard below and the butler ran in, exclaiming, in a terrified voice:

"My lady, they are using one of the new gateposts as a battering-ram, and the door is yielding fast!"

Then came a still louder shock! another and another! Exultant yells rose from the lower storey, and were immediately followed by the sound of heavily shod feet upon the stairs!

(To be Continued.)

GLORIA;

OR,

MARRIED IN RAGE.

CHAPTER LIII.

As soon as they were left together Gloria's impulsive spirit broke forth in vehement lamentations of their lost years.

"Oh, it seems so strange the great mistake that you had lost your life in that fire was not discovered and the report contradicted long ago. One would think the people who went over with you on the steamer would have spread the news of your existence."

"You forgot, dear Gloria, that the steamer sailed at eight o'clock in the morning, while the smouldering ruins must still have been burning in places, and before any bodies had been recovered or any statistics published about the loss of life."

"But, oh, David Lindsay, while I had every reason to believe that you had passed away, you had every reason to know that I was still on this earth. Oh, why did you not write to me again and again, and persevere in writing until you had got an answer? You would have got one, indeed you would!"

"Little lady," said the young man, very

gravely, "if I could have hoped for a favourable answer to any letter of mine to you—an answer from your heart, unbiassed by your tender compassion or your delicate conscience, then indeed I should have written and continued to write, until I had obtained such an answer, or, not succeeding in that, I should have sought a personal interview with you; but, dear Gloria, remember that though I had every reason to know that you were living, I had also every reason to believe that you had forgotten me, or wished to forget me."

"Oh, David Lindsay!"

"Listen, dearest! In the last letter that I wrote to you, I told you that I did not wish to play the rôle of Colonel De Crespigny—work upon your benevolence and your conscience, to gain by them the perfect union that my love could not win from your love, and that therefore, if I should get no answer then, I should accept my fate in silence and not write to trouble you again. No letters came. I did not write again. I thought you wished to forget me."

"Ah, don't repeat that, dear David Lindsay!"

"Well, I will not. But I did not wish to have you take my hand in any moment of 'idiotic compassion.'"

"And therefore you did not persevere in writing to me. Oh, those lost years! those lost years that I have wasted in frivolity!"

"Dear Gloria, we have much time and all eternity still before us. You are but twenty-three, and I but twenty-seven—younger than most young people are when they marry; and then we spent some years of our childhood together," said David Lindsay, with an arch smile.

"Ah, those happy years!" exclaimed Gloria, quickly reverting to the brighter picture; "those years when we used to be together all day long on the beach, you at work netting seines or mending boats, I reading to you, or talking with you, and—"

"Hearing my lessons."

"No, 'hindering your work,' I was going to say; and then helping you to cook our dinner on the sand. Oh, those little, open air meals!"

So they drifted on from regretful memories of wasted years to delightful reminiscences of child-like joys.

Then David Lindsay gave her a detailed account of his life since they had parted, of his discovery of his father, Dyvyd Gryphyn, whose name he had never borne, and now never meant to bear, whose inheritance he had never owned, and never meant to own.

"Oh, David Lindsay!" she suddenly exclaimed, "I have something to tell you that I wonder I have not told you before—something that will please you! You know those two little children whom you saved?"

"Well—yes—slightly," he replied, with a smile.

"Well, you had saved them, and as everyone supposed at the cost of your life. Thenceforth to me those children, saved at so costly a price, became very precious. I hunted up their parents and found them very poor, having lost their little all in that fire, but rejoicing exceedingly in the rescue of their children, yet with what Shakespeare would call, 'a defeated joy,' since they were also full of regrets at the supposed fate of their deliverer. In a word, David Lindsay, because you saved them, and in remembrance of you, I determined to make their welfare my charge. I have supported and educated them ever since. Are you not glad to hear of your little protégées?"

"Very glad to hear of those children again, and of your intimate and beneficial relations to them. They were little more than babies when I saved them. They must be fine little girls by this time," he said.

Then Gloria reverted to the subject of Gryphynhold, and said:

"You have declared your intention of never taking the name of Gryphyn, or of owning Gryphynhold, and I know that you are right, and I also know that when you make a decision founded upon principle you never change it.

This rich old manor was yours by every moral and legal right, and mine only by purchase. Never mind that. If you will never own the place, and we may never live in it, still we can do what we used to speak of—turn the grim old stronghold into a smelting furnace for the iron in the mountains. This will be the means of doing a great deal of good in many ways. It will develop the resources of the country; it will give constant employment to a large number of idle men with needy families, and it will throw large quantities of pig iron into the market for the use of manufacturers, and, finally, it will bring us a vast revenue which we may apply to the objects of the broad charity in which we shall consecrate our joint lives."

"You will have to give up much, dear Gloria—much that young ladies of rank prize above everything," said the young man, gravely.

"Toys and syllabubs for solid happiness. I am in earnest about this, David Lindsay."

David Lindsay earnestly clasped her hand for all answer.

Gloria went in the adjoining room and called Miss Agrippina, who soon made her appearance. "I hope you have had a nap, aunty," said Gloria.

"No, dear, I have not been asleep. I have been thinking of you two, and of the rather awkward position in which you find yourselves now, and of what your immediate course should be. And I daresay that you, neither of you, ever once thought of it."

"No indeed, aunty. But we will take counsel of you. What shall we do? Proclaim here in the hotel that David Lindsay and myself were married years ago, when we were children, and so make everyone's hair stand on end with astonishment?" inquired Gloria, veiling under a bantering air her real embarrassment.

"No, nor must you reunite your lives without a re-marriage. Listen to me, my dears. You were married years ago, in a moment of madness, and you separated, to all intents and purposes, at the altar. You have been apart all these years. You, David Lindsay, have never been heard of here as the husband of Gloria. You, Gloria, have been taken for a young widow, as you supposed yourself to be. Were you now to be reunited, without re-marriage, there would be no end of speculation, gossip, perhaps scandal. No explanation of yours, even supposing that you could explain the circumstances to society at large, would stop the talk. It would be embarrassing and humiliating—too much so to be endured," concluded Miss De Crespigny.

"What, then, do you propose, aunty?" inquired Gloria, with a perplexed look; while as for David Lindsay, he looked from one to the other, and kept silence, wisely leaving the affair in the hands of the two ladies, where it naturally belonged.

"This, then, is what I propose," continued Miss Agrippina, "that you defer your reunion until David Lindsay has fulfilled all his public and private engagements already made for London. How long will that take, Mr. Lindsay?"

"About two weeks," answered the young man, with a slightly crestfallen look.

"Oh, well, that is not very long to wait. You need not enter into any new engagements for London, I suppose, and you, who have been patient in hopelessness so many years, may very well be patient now for two or three weeks. Now, if you will excuse me, I will bid you good-night," and Miss De Crespigny, as she arose and kissed Gloria, also gave her hand to David Lindsay.

They excused her, and, moreover, when left together, they agreed to the expediency of following her advice.

David Lindsay lingered near his love as long as discretion would permit, and then bade her good-night, leaving on her lips the first lover's kiss he had ever given to her or any other being.

"And what will you do, aunty, dear, when David Lindsay and myself go on our wedding tour? We must see you comfortable and happy

before we leave you," said Gloria to Miss De Crespigny, as they sat at breakfast in their private parlour the next morning.

"Oh, my child, I shall do very well. I shall make every preparation to leave on the same day that you do. I shall go to Amsterdam and join my sister-in-law and nieces there. They have been clamouring for me to come, you know."

As they spoke the door was opened.

"Mr. Lindsay" was announced and entered the parlour.

Gloria arose frankly to give him a cordial welcome.

David Lindsay had come, ostensibly, to offer his services for escorting them to view the new Houses of Parliament.

And, after this, the young man came to see them every day upon some pretext or other, or upon none at all, and spent every moment of his leisure time with Gloria.

It was arranged that their wedding should take place on the last Thursday in February, when "John Servant's" engagements in London should all be completed and David Lindsay be free to go out of town.

During the two weeks that intervened between his first lecture in London and his marriage, David Lindsay had received many proposals from the continental cities to deliver his course of lectures.

After consulting with Gloria he had determined to make his arrangements so as to accept them all in turn and to complete the whole during the summer.

In order to accomplish this the young couple decided to commence their married life with useful work, and instead of going on a holiday wedding trip, to go on a lecturing tour through all the cities where engagements had been offered to the missionary lecturer.

It was a rare, sunny day for London, that last Thursday in February, fixed for the wedding of David and Gloria.

The wedding was to be a very quiet one, no guests being invited except the family of the bridesmaids.

The bride was for convenience to be married in her travelling dress, a silver-grey poplin suit, with hat, veil and gloves to match.

The bridesmaids wore silver-grey silk suits, finished about the bodice and sleeves with Valenciennes lace and pale blue ribbon.

At eleven o'clock the carriages containing the bride and her friends set out to St. George's Church, Hanover Square, which was but a short distance off.

After the ceremony the wedding party returned to an elegantly served breakfast.

There sat down at the table the host and hostess, Lord and Lady Ambleside, Miss De Crespigny, the two officiating clergymen, the bride and groom, the two bridesmaids and the "best man," six ladies and six gentlemen.

A small but most agreeable wedding party.

Several of the guests declared afterwards that this was one of the most enjoyable affairs of the kind that they had ever assisted at.

After the breakfast the bride and bridegroom took leave of their friends, and followed by the hearty good wishes of all present, entered their carriage and drove to the London Bridge Railway Station, where they took the tidal train to Dover, in connection with the Calais boat; for their continental lecturing tour was to commence in the provincial towns of France.

The day after the wedding Miss De Crespigny set out for Amsterdam, where she arrived safely in due time, to be most affectionately welcomed by her sister-in-law and her two nieces, who were now the happy mothers of four children apiece—two boys and two girls each.

Soon after she was settled down in the home of Euphrasia, her eldest niece, and had seen and praised and petted all the little children, and had given the family a full account of the marriage of David Lindsay and Gloria De la Vera, with whose meeting she had made them acquainted through her letters, she asked for some news of her nephew Marcel and his young wife.

Madame De Crespigny assured her that Colonel and Mrs. Marcel De Crespigny were as

happy as it was possible for man and woman to be.

They had three children, all boys.

Yes, they were very happy, Marcel and Philippa, so very happy that madame was afraid they would never be willing to return East except for a short visit; but since they were happy madame was content.

David Lindsay and Gloria went on a lecturing tour, and spent the summer in travelling through Europe.

David Lindsay lectured in every city where they stopped.

All his lectures that were immediately directed to the working classes were free; other lectures, in their interests, were to be paid for by the audience or the "committee," as the case might be, and the funds so collected were devoted to the destitute children of the town.

Thus, wherever they passed, David Lindsay left a permanent benefit, and many were the Children's Homes and Children's Hospitals that sprang up on his way, owing their origin to his words and his deeds.

In September they returned to Liverpool, where David Lindsay delivered one lecture in behalf of the destitute children during their short stay.

The young couple had decided to go to Gryphynhold, and make arrangements for carrying out their plan in regard to that property.

Gloria had told David Lindsay that she had left the place in the charge of Peter Cummings as overseer, and Mrs. Brent as housekeeper, and that she had instructed Mr. Cummings to place all the funds arising from the place in the bank, reserving sufficient for the use of the property.

David Lindsay wrote to Mr. Cummings, and informed him that they would be down to the place in the course of a few weeks, and requested him to notify Mrs. Brent to have the house opened, ventilated, heated, and otherwise prepared for their reception.

It was in the first days of golden October that they reached Gryphynhold, when the woods and forests on mountains and in valleys were clothed in the most gorgeous hues of autumn.

They found Mrs. Brent living in the gatehouse, with her favourite niece, the "solid" Martha Cummings, for a companion—for nothing would induce the good woman to live in the old haunted manor-house.

She was overjoyed to welcome the travellers, and told them, with a burst of tears, how terrible to them all had been the news they had heard years before of Mr. Lindsay's death by fire, after his rescue of the children.

And how astonished and delighted she was on receiving her young lady's letter, telling her that the report had been all a mistake, and that Mr. Lindsay was all right, and they were coming home in the autumn.

All this Mrs. Brent said as she was attending the travellers through the thicket that had grown up between the lodge and the manor-house.

They found the old edifice ready for their reception, and as comfortable as it could be made—even fires had been freshly kindled in all the rooms and the tea-table set in the dining-room.

"I do not see how you managed to be prepared to the very hour, as you are, Mrs. Brent," said Gloria, after she had taken off her bonnet and wraps in her bedroom, and refreshed herself with a wash and came down to the dining-parlour.

"Why, child, I sent word to Aleck Cummings that the minute you arrived at Wolf's Gap, while you were resting, he must start off a man on his swiftest horse, so that the fires might be replenished—they have been kept up day and night, in a smouldering sort of way—and tea might be ready and everything comfortable. Well, the boy with the message came about three hours ago, which gave us time enough."

Aunt Judy now brought in the tea and made a courtesy to her young mistress with a broad smile of welcome.

"You will be our mother and pour the tea for us this first evening, Mrs. Brent," said Gloria. And the old lady took the head of the table and the young people sat down.

(To be Continued.)

CONVICTED.

CHAPTER XXI.

FELICIE in continuation of her version of the Mountheron tragedy said to Alex:

"It was not because of Lady Vivian's entreaties that his grace promised to do as she desired—his pride could not brook the idea of having a son-in-law hanged for murder.

"He applied to the Home Secretary, and to the Queen herself, but everyone believed Lord Stratford guilty and determined that he should be made an example of, and that his rank and high connections should not save him from his just doom.

"Lord Stratford escaped, as everyone knows. I suppose his grace knew who bribed the gaoler and planned the escape, which must have cost a handsome fortune."

Alex was stunned at this recital.

Her mother had not, then, deserted her father! She had always believed in his innocence! She had always loved him!

"I should not speak to you of these things, mademoiselle," said Felicie, "but you have heard a garbled report, and if you are to serve my lady you ought to know her as she is. If I were to talk all night, I could not make clear to you in all its height and depth her great love and faith in Lord Stratford Heron. She never knew a minute's real happiness after the night of the Mountheron tragedy.

"I think she had plans and hopes of leaving England and seeking for her husband in foreign lands, but the duke kept a close watch upon her and more than once threatened to send my lady to a lunatic asylum. When the news came that he had died abroad my lady was very ill. After that, his grace relaxed his severity, but for years my lady would not go into society, and it was only in obedience to her father's commands, and out of weariness of resistance, that she did so at last.

"The shock of the great tragedy, and of her child's death two years later, have wrecked her life. She smiles and reigns a queen of society, she is courted and flattered, and no one knows that under all her gaiety is hidden a broken heart."

Still Alex was silent. She could scarcely realise the truth of what she had heard. Could Felicie have seen her young face she would have been startled at its pallor and its dazed and stunned expression.

"And yet," said the girl, in a low, strained voice, presently breaking the silence, "she is thinking of a second marriage?"

"Ah, yes, but people who have loved devotedly sometimes marry the second time. My lady is alone in the world—utterly alone. Her great house is empty; her home is desolate. She has only me, and I count for nothing, being but her maid; yet I love her with all my soul, and my love has been a comfort to her. His grace, her ladyship's brother, has ties of his own, and a home of his own.

"My lord, the Marquis of Mountheron, adores her. He can take her to the home she had grown to love. He can give her the position her ambition craved. I am not sure but that she loves him almost as she loved Lord Stratford Heron, for he has been for years devoted to her. I think and hope that this later love has rooted out the ill-fated passion of her earlier years."

"But if Lady Vivian believed her husband innocent, why did she procure a divorce from him?" asked Alex.

"That was his grace's work, mademoiselle. He would not let her ladyship bear Lord Stratford Heron's dishonoured name."

"If she believed in her husband's innocence,"

continued Alex, her voice sounding strangely sharp, "why did she not try to vindicate it?"

"She did. She had detectives at work for weeks, but they declared their belief that Lord Stratford Heron was the murderer of his brother. No one else was ever suspected; no one else had the interest he had in his brother's death. There's no doubt about it, my lord was guilty, and my lady will do well to forget even his memory and marry the present Marquis of Mountheron.

"You shiver and tremble, mademoiselle. The hour is late, and you are tired. Let what I have told you make you tender to my lady, who has taken such a fancy to you. And now your lovely hair is done."

The girl expressed her thanks for the service Felicie had rendered her, and took her leave.

When the door had closed behind her Alex ran to a window and dropped on her knees by the casement and stared out into the night and at the sky with looks of agony.

"She has loved him always," she thought. "She tried to clear his name and failed. She tried to get to him when he lay in prison, but was prevented. She never lost her faith in him—she never once doubted his innocence. Oh, how papa and I have wronged her, my beautiful mother. Papa must know the truth—he shall know. He must no longer do her such terrible injustice as he has so innocently done. They love each other, and are parted by a gulf as wide and black as Death! She will marry again—oh, if I could only clear papa's name and restore him to his own, and that soon, they might yet be reunited. If it might be—if it only might be!"

Before Alex slept that night she had torn open the letter she had written and added a couple of closely-written sheets of letter-paper, detailing her interview with Felicie, and passionately vindicating Lady Vivian from the charges of abandonment of her husband in his hour of need.

She left what she had before written; she told her father that the marriage of the Lady Vivian with Lord Mountheron was only too probable; but begged him to do his divorced wife justice in his thoughts, and to believe that she had always been worthy his honour and deepest, tenderest love.

She sealed the packet anew, nearly covered its face with postage stamps, and then resumed her place at the window, too excited to sleep.

This letter, written in an outburst of filial love and anguish, with a heart torn with conflicting passions, love for the father whose only hope and comfort she had been for nearly all her life, and this new love for her beautiful mother—this letter was destined to do a work of which its writer never dreamed, to work a woe from which, could she have foreseen it, she would have shrunk back appalled.

The necessity of entering upon her mission in some active way pressed more heavily upon Alex than before, as she sat, wakeful and thoughtful, by the window at which we left her. She was groping about upon the threshold of the great mystery whose gloom and terror had darkened so many lives.

Oh, for one ray of light!

Oh, for the clue that should enable her to unravel the skein!

"I will go to Mount Heron Castle," she said to herself, resolutely, "upon the day after tomorrow. Something may happen then. I am certainly upon the right path. I feel that Providence is guiding me."

After a time a new sense of hopefulness and peace filled her young soul.

She arose from her knees, disrobed, and went to bed, sinking into a profound and restful sleep.

The next morning her duties as secretary and companion were entered upon.

Lady Vivian breakfasted in her own rooms, as was her custom.

Alex breakfasted below in the pleasant room opening upon the gardens, which was devoted to the morning meal.

Afterward Felicie conducted her to the Lady Vivian, who was in her boudoir, in the midst of her morning letters.

Her ladyship received Alex with a pleasant greeting, and pointed out a seat for her at a little desk close at hand.

"I have some letters for you to answer, my dear," she said. "We will attend to them first."

Alex wrote several letters from the Lady Vivian's dictation, and her ladyship, on looking them over, expressed her approval.

Felicie was then sent to put the missives in the post-bag, and Alex, drawing her letter to her father from her pocket, sent that also.

The Lady Vivian was attired in a dressing-gown of pale pink cashmere trimmed with swan's-down.

She reclined in her easy-chair indolently, her gaze fixed intently upon Alex.

"Take up that volume of *Béranger*, my dear," said her ladyship, "and read to me."

Alex obeyed, reading with rare beauty of expression.

Her low, sweet, flexible voice was like music to the ears of her listener. Lady Vivian closed her eyes and gave herself up to the enchantment of the hour.

"That will do, my dear," she said, at last, being always mindful of the comfort of those who served her. "I must not let you get hoarse. I will dress for luncheon. Afterwards there will be amusements of some sort, and later we will drive on the Bluff road to Mount Heron village.

She dismissed Alex, who returned to her own room, remaining there until the hour for luncheon.

All the guests of the house then assembled together. Some had spent the morning on the sea, some had been to Mount Heron village, intent upon matching wools at the "Ladies' Repository," and others had played lawn-tennis, or strolled through the park.

Not one of them all was gayer than the beautiful hostess, who was full of suggestions for employment during the hours preceding dinner.

Alex had her share in the pleasures of the afternoon. Lady Vivian treated her in all respects as her social equal, and the guests were not slow to follow the example of their hostess, treating Alex politely, even while wondering among themselves at Lady Vivian's caprice in making so much of a hired companion.

One lady suggested to one of her friends that no doubt Alex was the daughter of some early friend of Lady Vivian, of good birth, but impoverished, and that her ladyship was desirous of seeing her protégée well married.

This theory was repeated as a declaration, and was accepted unquestioningly by the others as the truth, until Lady Markham, in her envy and jealousy, took especial pains to assert privately, and under promises of secrecy, her belief that Alex was an adventuress who had imposed upon Lady Vivian, and who would play the part of the serpent in the fable which stings the hand of his benefactor.

In consequence of Lady Markham's insinuations, and in spite of Lady Vivian's kindness, the evening proved dull and lonely to Alex. She played and sang, and then drifted to a seat in the window, and was left to herself.

The next day was that appointed for the dinner at Mount Heron Castle.

Upon that morning Lady Vivian breakfasted with her guests. The plans of the day were discussed, the dinner was talked over, but the hostess had not yet decided whether she would or would not go. After breakfast Lady Vivian retired to the library with her letters and with Alex.

The great vaulted apartment was deserted at that hour, the guests having departed in various directions in quest of amusement.

The draperies were drawn away from the casement windows, permitting a view of sea and cliff.

A bright fire burned on the hearth, and the ancient and perpetual gloom of the place was relieved by its cheerful blaze.

Alex had written several letters at Lady

Vivian's dictation, and was reading aloud from a volume of Goethe when the Marquis of Mountheron was announced.

"Show him in here," said Lady Vivian to the servant. "No, my dear," she added, as Alex made a movement to withdraw, "you need not go. If you are to stay long with me, you will become used to the visits of my friend, Lord Mountheron. You can translate that difficult passage for me. I should like to see it in English, and study out the obscure meaning."

Alex resented herself at her desk just as the marquis entered the room. He did not see her, at first, but approached the Lady Vivian, his gentle face aglow, his mild, soft eyes beaming with unmistakable affection.

The Lady Vivian arose, receiving him with marked kindness.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, marquis," she said, pleasantly.

"You are pleased to see me, Vivian?" he exclaimed, smiling. Then seeing Alex for the first time, he bowed to her coldly, evidently not delighted with her presence.

"I am always pleased to see you, Rowland," replied Lady Vivian, gravely. "I do not think you need to be assured of that."

"No, I do not. You have always been kind to me beyond my deserts in all ways except one," said Lord Mountheron, lowering his voice so that it barely reached Alex's ears. "I came over this morning to ask an especial favour of you, Vivian."

"And that is?"

"That you will honour the castle to-day with your presence. You have refused to visit my home hitherto, Vivian; I beg you to refuse no longer," pleaded her lover. "You have half led me to hope that you would come."

"I have been tempted to go," interrupted Lady Vivian, agitatedly. "But I fear that I shall overtask my strength. The place is full of terrible memories. I cannot visit it in a festive mood."

"Yet there were the happiest hours of your life spent, Vivian. It was there you came a bride; there your brief married life with poor Stratford was spent. It was there your little child was born. Forgive me, Vivian, but the place should be hallowed to you above all places on the earth."

"It is—it is!"

"Your rooms have never been occupied since the day you left them," urged Lord Mountheron. "The housekeeper airs and warms them at stated periods, but she has never disturbed the furniture. If you were to enter those old rooms you would feel at home! Everything remains to this day as you left them. Your child's crib, her toys on the floor."

Lady Vivian gave a little gasp as for breath, and turned away her face.

"I saw, as I passed the door the other day, when the housekeeper was in the room, a baby's shoe on the carpet," said Lord Mountheron—"a tiny white-kid slipper."

Lady Vivian put up her hand.

"Don't!" she said, in a choked voice. "I cannot bear it! And yet I would give a fortune to see again those sacred rooms!"

A flush of satisfaction appeared on Lord Mountheron's face.

"Come and see them!" he urged. "You can steal away from the guests for a little visit to them, and no one will remark upon your absence. The castle has been beautified and altered except in those old rooms, and you will not find such painful memories as you think lurking for you in the corners. Come, Vivian, I entreat you to promise that you will honour me with your presence at the castle to-day. Does not my long devotion deserve some reward? For my sake, conquer your morbid shrinking from entering the dear old home where you once reigned supreme—and where you may again reign as its lawful and honoured mistress!"

His persuasive tones, sweet as honey, soft as a Southern zephyr, were yet distinctly audible to Alex. She moved uneasily, but neither Lady Vivian nor Lord Mountheron noticed her. In spite of herself, Alex was obliged to hear all that was said.

"You tempt me to go, Rowland," said Lady Vivian, hoarsely. "A longing comes over me to see again those rooms, to possess my baby's shoe! And I might find—" she checked herself abruptly.

"Might find what, Vivian? You will find the old servants there, most of them at least, including the housekeeper and butler—"

"And Pierre Renaud?" interposed Lady Vivian.

The marquise started, and looked surprised.

"Yes, he is there also," he said, briefly. "The fellow was homeless when I came into possession, accomplished in his peculiar duties, and was, withal, so stricken with grief at the tragical death of his late master that I took him into my service. I have never regretted doing so."

"Was he stricken with grief at Lord Mountheron's murder?" asked Lady Vivian. "Why, he had suffered at his master's hand; had been scarred for life by the marquise, and had sworn an oath to be revenged. The marquise was murdered that same night—and Pierre Renaud, the valet, was 'stricken with grief.' I can't understand it."

"You never spoke of Renaud in that way before, Vivian. Do you dislike him?"

"I do not honour a man of his stamp with my like and dislike," said Lady Vivian, haughtily. "I simply commented on your statement. But you seem to like the man. He has been in your employment many years—in fact, ever since the tragedy."

"Yes. The cunning dog has managed to make himself necessary to me. He knows my fancies and peculiarities, and I do not know that I could live without him," said Lord Mountheron, smiling. "But let us return to our muttons, as the French say. Will you come to the castle this evening, Lady Vivian?"

Lady Vivian hesitated. For some minutes she battled with herself. She had a deep repugnance, an almost unconquerable shrinking from the proposed visit, but there were reasons—possibly those urged by her lover—possibly the longing to obtain the little toys and shoe that had belonged to her child, and to see again the rooms to which she had gone as a happy, joyous bride—that impelled her to yield assent.

"I—I will go!" she said at last, in a voice filled with pain, speaking with a reluctance that showed how severe had been her mental struggle.

Lord Mountheron seized her hand and raised it to his lips, in a transport of joy and gratitude.

"This is the first actual sign of encouragement you have ever granted me, Vivian," he exclaimed. "I have worshipped you afar off for years. And now comes the first token of your kindness and favour. No, not the first, for you came to Clyffe House at my request, after having declined for many years to visit it. It is the second favour you have granted and the greatest. You have been as cold to me as to the rest of your suitors, but now the ice begins to melt under the sunshine of my love."

Lady Vivian did not reply. Her face was averted from her lover.

Alex, from some sudden impulse, glanced at her ladyship, and was startled at its expression of weariness, bitterness, loathing, and some other emotion so indescribable and yet so terrible that the girl was frightened.

It seemed to her that the Lady Vivian's mask had momentarily fallen, and as if she beheld her soul which was strung to some mighty purpose.

The next moment the Lady Vivian was her society self again.

CHAPTER XXII.

MOUNT HERON CASTLE, perched upon its dizzy height, overlooking the sea, was all ablaze with lights, and looked like a vast beacon set on high to warn ships from the dangerous shore. It was the night appointed for Lord Mountheron's dinner-party, and the grim old castle wore a festive air not altogether in keeping with its time-honoured and hoary aspect.

The long, steep and winding ascent up the rugged hill was lighted with lanterns hung in the trees that bordered the avenue. The terraces which had long ago been cut in the rock and covered with fertile earth in which trees and shrubbery were set, and which were enclosed with marble balustrades, were also brilliantly lighted.

The grounds, which were a marvel of skill and patience, presented a scene of enchantment.

The castle was worthy its surroundings. The grand old hall, large enough, one might almost say, to encamp a regiment of soldiers, was hung with armour, trophies of the ancient days when the Mountherons were terrible in battle. Two great fireplaces, blazing with logs, now warmed this lofty and long apartment, from which, on either side, opened the state chambers.

The drawing-room was a hundred feet in length, supplied with three fireplaces, in all of which sea-coal fires were burning, and was lighted by great chandeliers, in which forests of wax-candles glowed, their light reflected from hosts of glittering cut crystals.

The furniture of this room was upholstered in gold-coloured satin, which reflected the light, making the apartment dazzling beyond description.

There were a dozen windows, some of them recessed and shut off by long satin curtains. The pictures and statuary were from the hands of ancient masters. The ceiling was a marvel of frescoing.

Connected with this drawing-room by folding doors was a grand conservatory, with dome-shaped roof and spreading wings, filled with tropical trees and plants and flowers.

This conservatory was noted far and wide for the splendour of its products. Flowers were sent from it every day to Clyffe House in profusion, but a perfect wilderness of bloom remained.

Lights gleamed softly from the midst of creeping vines and from the shadows of spreading palm-trees; the fragrance of orange blossoms filled the air; the plash of fountains delighted the ear; and the rare glow of fragile orchids ravished the eye; all senses found in this half-dusky retreat their fullest gratification.

Lord Mountheron was alone in the drawing-room, none of his guests having descended to join him.

He was in full evening-dress, and his manner was both restless and expectant. His soft, mild eyes were brighter than usual, his gentle face wore a look of mingled triumph and delight.

"It is time she were here," he said to himself, after a glance at the tiny *Sèvres* clock, going to one of the windows and parting the curtains. "I hear no sound of wheels. But she will surely come. I have her promise, and Vivian is not one to lightly give or break a promise. She surely cannot be so capricious as to change her mind and refuse to come!" and a sudden anxiety took possession of him, with a conviction that the Lady Vivian might possibly be just so capricious. "Her old recollections may overcome her at the last minute—the remembrance of that long-ago horror may overwhelm her—I am half wild with suspense. Oh, if someone from the Clyffe House would only come."

He listened for the sound of wheels on the avenue, but none were heard.

His face grew pale with his anxiety and suspense.

"There is so much dependent upon her coming to-night," he muttered, restlessly. "If she conquers her horror of this place it will be for my sake. She has never given me any marked encouragement in my suit, although I have worshipped her so long and so madly. True, she came down to Clyffe House at my solicitation, and that act was surely encouragement of marked description. I should not have forgotten it for a moment. But if she comes here to-night every one will construe the act into an acknowledgment of betrothal between her and me. If she comes, she virtually accepts my suit and promises to be my wife. If she comes it will be as the future mistress of the castle—and she knows this as well as I do. If she has

love or ambition enough to make her desirous of reigning here as mistress, she will come."

He listened again expectantly, but no sound of wheels yet broke the stillness.

His nervousness was now excessive. He took a turn or two about the end of his room, and again looked forth from the window.

"This is the turning-point, the crisis of my life," he whispered, hoarsely. "If she does not come I shall know myself finally rejected. I cannot give her up, the most beautiful, the proudest, grandest woman in all England. I will not give her up. But if she comes I shall know that I have won her, my glorious Vivian, the proud daughter of one of England's proudest dukes. This suspense is agony."

The door opened and a lady in full evening dress swept into the apartment.

She was Mrs. Ingestre, the elderly widow of Lord Mountheron's elderly brother.

She enacted the part of hostess to the marquise's guests, and was virtually mistress of the castle.

She was well preserved, and wore a mauve silk gown, and a lace coiffure upon her grey curls.

She was corpulent in figure, moved slowly and was slow in speech, a hypochondriac, always fancying herself afflicted with incurable diseases and fortunately possessing a small income in her own right which amply sufficed for all her wants, since her only expenses were for clothing.

She thought her brother-in-law, Lord Mountheron, the most perfect of men.

He had been very generous and kind to her, and certainly deserved her gratitude.

"Ah, is it you, Augusta?" said the marquise, turning around. "You are looking unusually well this evening."

"I look better than I feel, Rowland," replied his sister-in-law, in a melancholy voice. "This excitement has quite overtaken me. I am but a fragile reed at best. I have written a dozen letters to-day; have superintended the housekeeper, and am more fit to be in bed this minute than here to receive your guests."

Lord Mountheron expressed his regret at her overtaken condition as politely as if he had not heard such complaints daily for years.

"The truth is," said Mrs. Ingestre, "I need sympathy and assistance. I have been discontented since our visit to Clyffe House the other evening. Lady Vivian is still young, the incarnation of health and vigour, and she has besides her maid and her chaperone, Lady Markham, a young girl whose sole duty is to answer her letters, read to her, sing to her, and kill time for her when she is ennued. Of course, I know," continued the lady, in an aggrieved tone, "that I am not a duke's daughter, and a duke's sister with a splendid estate in my own right and a splendid income, able to gratify every caprice that may enter my mind, but I am human," and she sniffed a little, and put a lace-bordered handkerchief to her eyes. "I am human, nobody can deny that, although I am a widow, and poorly jointured."

"I think no one denies your being human, Augusta," said Lord Mountheron, mildly.

"No, I suppose not. Everyone is willing to allow me that small privilege," said Mrs. Ingestre, with some acerbity. "But Lady Vivian Clyffe entertains company; she is a belle; what does she want of a companion? Now, look at me. When our guests shall have gone I shall be without womanly companionship, with only that horrid sea dinning at my ears, and with a few county families to visit once a week or seldom. I ought to have had a companion instead of Lady Vivian. I ought, indeed, Rowland."

"You can have one if you like, Augusta," said the marquise, indifferently. "I have never denied you anything you have desired of me. If you want a companion, as Lady Vivian has, get one. You can afford to pay her salary, and I will give her a home."

Mrs. Ingestre's eyes sparkled. She had bitterly envied the Lady Vivian's appanages of state, and had longed to have a companion to beguile her loneliness. She warmly expressed her thanks.

(To be Continued)



[HAPPY DAYS.]

"JUSTIFIABLE HOMICIDE."

JACK HINTON was an artist, and the least romantic of men.

It had always been a mystery to his many friends how he came to look upon painting as the means of living and fortune-making.

An artist, according to the popular idea, should be rather a good-looking man, with long hair curling gracefully over the collar, white attenuated hands, with a weakness for baggy trousers and seedy velvet jackets.

Jack, though not decidedly ugly, was certainly not handsome.

His hair was cut to the regulation shortness, and was as straight as a bell-pull.

He was rather particular about his clothes, and would as soon have meditated promenading down Regent Street in Choctaw moccasins and feathers as of appearing in ill-fitting trousers and paint-stained velvet jacket.

Perhaps his unromantic turn of mind and unartistic appearance were the great stumbling blocks in poor Jack's road to fortune.

I say "poor" Jack, though after all he was scarcely a fit subject for commiseration.

Many cleverer and more deserving slaves of the palette fare worse than he did; have no cosy, though plain, rooms in Badely Street, and still worse, have not the luck to find a ready sale amongst the picture-shops for their "Studies by Sunset" and "Cows Drinking."

For Jack, though still unrepresented at the

Academy, and as yet unknown to the angelic band of art-critics, possessed a peculiar and ready knack of seizing the salient points in a small piece of landscape, and the power of transferring them with more or less faithfulness, but always with a certain tacking "chic," to his canvases.

Now-a-days "Cows Drinking" and "Sunset at the Mill" are considered necessary ornaments in every breakfast-room, and City merchants or well-to-do tradespeople with the requisite ignorance of art were always to be found to purchase such little "studies."

So Jack, by continually working, managed to earn enough wherewith to pay Mrs. Jenkins' rent and keep himself properly fed and clothed.

It was a strange, monotonous life he led, one of almost unbroken toil, for Jack Hinton came of a branch of the great Yorkshire Hintons, and inheriting a certain rough dignity, could not bring himself to join the stupidly vicious amusements of his artist friends.

Many a young fellow has left the school with a resolute determination to stick at it steadily and keep straight, but found himself overpowered by the colourless routine of hard work, and step by step going the Bohemian way of the rest.

But Jack's self-respect and the aforesaid dignity and pride kept him at his work and steadfast against temptation, saved him from the orthodox debts, dues, and morning headaches.

Yet he had many friends—brother artists who liked him none the less, perhaps rather the more, for his refusal to join them in their midnight freaks, and who were always certain to come to

him when they needed a sympathetic ear or the loan of a five-pound note.

The money was not always forthcoming, but the sympathetic ear and the few words of condolence or rough-and-ready advice always were.

The most intimate of these young, wild spirits was a certain Willie Lee.

He required more sympathy and five-pound notes than any of the others, and was indebted to Jack for his release from many a scrape which without his common sense and ready kindness might have ended seriously for Master Willie.

He came one morning to Badely Street on his usual mission—to borrow—and having been successful, invited Jack in a burst of gratitude to come down with him to Hurley to see his "people," as he called them.

"Who are your people, Willie?" asked Jack, working away at his easel while he talked.

"Mother and sister," replied Lee. "They'll be very glad to see you, Jack. I've often mentioned you in my letters, and—told them what a thorough good fellow you are."

"Much obliged, I'm sure," said Jack. "Just give me that Vandyke there, will you? When are you going?"

"On Saturday. We can stay over Monday, if you'll come. Don't say no, Jack."

"I'm sorry," said Jack, dabbing away at a cow, "but I don't think I can manage it."

"Why not?" queried the other, made more eager, as usual, by the refusal. "You don't work on Sunday, like most of us, I know, Jack, and you said yesterday that you weren't going anywhere. Why won't you come? We are very homely sort of people, and mother and sis will make you welcome."

"Well, the fact is, Willie," said Jack, reluctantly deserting the cow, and turning rather a flushed face, "the fact is, that is the last note I have. Don't take it out, old fellow," for the other had thrust his hand into his pocket. "I don't want it till Monday, as I have enough to run me through the week. But you see—no, I don't think I can come this week, Willie, though I am just as grateful for the invitation."

Willie Lee rose and laid the note upon the paint-smeared table with a decided shake of his head.

"Then I shan't take the note, and there's an end of it."

Jack tried him hard, but the young fellow stood firm, and at last they arranged a compromise, to the effect that Jack was to retain the necessary sum for a new pair of gloves and the railway fare, and Willie was to take the remainder.

Accordingly Jack went down to Hurley, and as the reader, with a weary sigh, has without doubt already foreboded, fell in love with Clara Lee.

I do not wish to linger over their courtship, as Jack's one romance fell to him during his married life, and will therefore spare the reader the recital of Jack's heart-burnings and Clara's blushes, detailing only the proposal which for its unromantic uniqueness should not be lost.

Jack and Clara were in the garden at Hurley—a romantic opening enough—Jack smoking a cigar—he did not like a pipe, and smoked but seldom—Clara picking the stalks from a leaf of red currants.

"What are you going to do with those currants, Clara?" said Jack. (Be it noted that a romantic man would have called her "Miss Lee," or looked tender when pronouncing her Christian name.) "There seems too many of them for a pie."

"A pie! Oh, there's a great deal too many, Mr. Hinton," replied Clara. "We are going to preserve them."

"Jam!" mused Jack. "I'm very fond of jam. It's very expensive."

"Indeed!" said Clara, looking up with simple prettiness. "What do you pay for it?"

"A shilling a pot," said matter-of-fact Jack. "It doesn't run to jam often."

"A shilling!" repeated Clara; "oh, that is dear. Why, this will only cost about three-pence."

"Eh!" said Jack, with a start of admiring astonishment. "Why, that's a clear saving of ninepence. I say, Clara, you know you could

make bread and all that sort of thing, couldn't you. And if you save ninepence in a pot of jam—why, it might be done, after all."

"What?" asked Clara, opening her bright eyes to their fullest.

"I beg your pardon," said Jack, pulling himself out of his leaning attitude with the air of a man suddenly resolved upon a grave course of action.

"I beg your pardon, but you said, I think, that you liked London?"

"Yes," said Clara, with an upward glance.

"Badely Street is a very decent sort of street, nice and open, and Mrs. Jenkins is a good sort of a woman. I wonder, now, if Mrs. Lee would see any objection to your marrying me, and if—"

A softly-delivered but not indignant "Oh!" from Clara stopped him, and with a slight nod of the head he said:

"I think I'll go and ask her," in the simplest and most common-place manner.

He found Mrs. Lee amongst the gooseberry bushes, and put the question there and then.

Shortly after they were married, and then Jack's luck took a decidedly favourable turn.

One of his little pictures was purchased by a wealthy iron-master, who by dint of perpetually insisting that it was a gem, and debating on its real or fancied beauties to his numerous guests, created a demand for pictures with "J. H." in the corner.

No. 28, Badely Street was exchanged for a pretty little cottage on the banks of the Thames and Mrs. Jenkins for a neat and sentimental handmaiden.

In their pretty little home Mr. and Mrs. Hinton—or Jack and Clara, as their friends seem compelled to call them—were supremely happy, very proud of the furniture, and gradually, as Jack's pictures steadily rose in value, getting together a few articles of plate and vertu, for Mrs. Hinton was not so indifferent to the beautiful and the rare as was the unambitious Jack.

After they had been settled at Nookham some eight or nine months, and the neighbours had become friendly, the plate not inconsiderable, and Jack's name rather well known, a series of successful and daring burglaries formed the subject of general conversation.

The next village—or town, as it called itself—to Nookham had been favoured by a visit from one of the gangs, who, in orthodox list slippers and the costermonger fur cap, had managed to make off with several sets of family jewels and plate.

Nookham was in a state of excitement, and talked of an increase in the local police force, at present consisting solely and mainly of one intelligent constable, who was always to be found hard at work in his own back garden.

A week later another burglary, this time accompanied with some maltreating of the master of the house, kept the excitement at fever heat, and gave the Nookhamites every reason to expect that their turn was approaching.

There was a general inspection of recent improvements in fastenings, and the ironmonger, who was also linendraper, grocer, and bootmaker, drove a brisk trade in patent "thief-detectors" and spring alarms.

Jack worked through it all with laudable indifference.

He had never read any novels excepting "Mary Powell," and there were no burglars, list shoes, and black crape masks in that to set his imagination at work.

Clara—who had indulged in some of the sensational literature of the period—was rather alarmed at the state of things, and in her timid, suggestive way proposed that Jack should buy a bull-dog.

"Certainly, my love," said Jack, buttering his toast, for the suggestion was delivered during breakfast, "but he'll be sure to bite one of us within the first half hour of his arrival, and howl at night till Mr. Sandy over the way complains of us as a nuisance."

"Well, we ought to do something," urged Clara. "I am sure it is dreadful to read the shocking accounts of the burglaries in Colme—and that's only three miles from here, Jack."

"Why do you read them?" said Jack, honestly. "I don't see what we can do save lock and bolt pretty carefully, and I'm sure we do that, or else the two hours after supper you and Mary spend in fidgetting about the garden doors are thrown away."

Clara laughed with him, of course, and Jack made his way to his studio.

In the afternoon, however, a neighbour, a genial, light-hearted fellow, by name Clifford, looked in on some trivial matter, and, of course, started the current topic.

"I've just bought a revolver," he said, "as a protection. There it is—two of 'em. I shall return one."

And he handed Jack two very formidable-looking weapons.

Jack turned them over.

"Nicely made," he said, "highly polished and finished. They'll be nice little ornaments for your smoking-room. What are you to give for them?"

"One is better than the other," said Mr. Clifford. "This is three guineas and that four. I shall keep the smaller, I think. By-the-way, have you got one? You ought to have something in the way of protection; these fellows are sure to pay some of us a visit, and they don't seem to stand at trifles. Poor Morris, their last victim, is fearfully knocked about."

"Hem," mused Jack. "To tell you the truth, I don't feel so alarmed as some of you. We are scarcely tempting enough."

"You have quite as much plate as Morris."

"Well," said Jack, anxious to get at his work, "I think I will. Where did you get these?"

"At Colme. There are plenty of them there. Look here, I'll leave you this large one until you get one of your own; for, upon my word, I think you ought to have one."

Jack, not liking to refuse the kindly-meant offer, took the revolver, and, observing that it was loaded and ought not to be left about, carried it into his bedroom, and placed it in the corner of his collar-drawer.

In a few minutes Mr. Clifford went away, and Jack, dismissing him and his revolver from his mind, set to work.

After dinner—they dined at six—it was Clara's custom to bring her book or her work into the studio, and sit there, dividing reading and working with silent contemplation of Jack at his work; watching the development of backgrounds and the introduction of cows and swallows with lively and loving interest.

They were very happy, as I have said, and Jack worked better when his pretty little wife was at his elbow, and he could slip back to take a view and a kiss at the same time.

They were to be happier still in the future; Jack said he intended painting a baby-picture for the next Academy, but should wait a month or two for a living model.

That evening, a bright and sunshiny one, seemed particularly peaceful and delicious; perhaps because it was to be the last one they were to enjoy for some months to come.

As the dusk fell Jack laid aside his palette and brushes and heard Clara went down to take a cup of tea.

At ten they were on their way to rest, Jack stopping on the stairs to pull down the blind and announce that it was a full moon and a beautiful night.

Two hours later he was awakened by the sound of something grating against the hall door.

He raised himself on his elbow and listened.

The noise ceased for a moment or two, as all suspicious sounds carefully listened for always do, and Jack, glad that the noise had not disturbed Clara, and attributing it to the cat or a passing mouse, lay down again.

He must have fallen asleep immediately, for it was such an unpleasant start that he woke again, roused by the unmistakable creaking of the stairs. The room was quite illuminated by the bright moonlight, and he could see Clara's pretty face lying calm and peacefully beside him.

It was a critical time with his young wife, and

a sudden alarm or fright must be followed by disastrous results.

He got out of bed carefully and quietly, and took the revolver from the drawer.

If he could but come on them suddenly and frighten them off without terrifying or even awakening Clara!

His heart beats fast, though not with fear; and as noiselessly as before he opened the door and saw, what he had expected, three dim figures in dirty, clay-stained corduroys, with hideous repulsive faces, half concealed by the usual fur cap.

Their astonishment at his appearance did not last longer than a minute, the next they were springing up the stairs with the audacity of three to one, two steps at a time.

He was partly in the shadow when they first saw him, so that they did not observe the revolver which poor Jack instinctively pointed full at them.

When they did see it, however, they paused, and then Jack tried to speak.

They gave him no time, evidently thinking he intended raising an alarm, but one after another sprang towards him.

"Keep back," said Jack, in a low voice, clinging to the desperate hope of frightening them away without alarming Clara. "Keep back or I shall fire."

And at that moment sure enough the revolver did fire, and the foremost man fell back with a groan.

Jack, who was quite unconscious of moving the trigger, was startled.

"Take care!" he cried, "he is shot."

The remaining ruffians, with sundry oaths, stooped down, and lifting their comrade staggered to the window.

Before the sash was raised, however, Jack heard voices at the front door accompanied by hammering and shouts of "stop thief."

And now thoroughly confused he ran down the stairs after the two men, who seeing that they were hard pressed, dropped their lifeless burden and sprang through the window, one of them aiming a blow with his crowbar at Jack's head, which fortunately fell short.

Then Jack ran to the door, and revolver still in hand, opened it.

Instantly the village constable, together with half a dozen others from Colme, rushed past him towards the open window with renewed cries.

Jack followed. He was still in his nightshirt, and calling to them to look after the wounded man, hurried to the bedroom.

By the bed stood Clara, clutching its post and looking as white as the sheets from which she had risen.

"Oh, Jack!" she exclaimed, and then fainted, which was perhaps, under the circumstances, the best thing she could have done.

Poor Jack laid her on the bed and shouted for Mary.

Then came a knocking at the door, and fain to answer it, he left Clara reluctantly, and opened it.

Outside was the Colme inspector, at his back two of his men, and half way up the stairs another stooping over something.

"Would you step this way, sir," said the inspector with suppressed excitement.

"Have you got them?" asked Jack, beckoning to Mary, who now appeared, and pushing her into the room to her mistress.

"No, sir, not yet; they can't get off though, I think," replied the policeman, shutting the bedroom door in a grave sort of way.

"I have called you, sir," he continued, more gravely than before, "to tell you that the man's dead."

Jack turned pale.

"Good heaven!" he said, "I—I didn't mean to shoot him. The revolver went off while I was holding it," and he bent over the clumsy figure of the burglar with a thrill of horror.

"I'm very sorry, sir," said the inspector, hovering over him, "but I must do my duty."

Jack stared in bewilderment.

Why didn't he take the man away, and go

after the others, and do his duty instead of talking about it?

He did not say as much, but he looked it, and a murmur of sympathy ran round, as the inspector said, with a reluctant shake of the head:

"I'm very sorry, sir, but I must arrest you for manslaughter!"

There was a moment's pause.

Jack thought of his young wife lying senseless in the next room—thought of all the happy months they had spent—of the happier months that were to come, and then unromantic as ever, said quietly:

"Very well, I'll go and dress. Please be as quiet as you can. Where is the revolver?"

The inspector held up the miserable weapon, and Jack, with a sorrowful look, went to put his clothes on.

As I refrained from inflicting Jack's courtship upon the reader, I may, perhaps, be excused from endeavouring to depict his and his wife's sufferings during the next two months.

I will only ask the reader to reflect upon the happiness they enjoyed before the fatal night; and to remember that, given a wife, a small house in the country, and a burglar or two, a similar misfortune might befall anyone rash enough to oppose the midnight ruffians with a loaded revolver.

Bail, for some technical reasons, was refused, so Jack had to remain in gaol, consoled as best he might be by the daily visits of poor Clara, who, in this trying time, proved herself not only a loving, but a brave little woman.

There was a great deal of feeling shown in the village, indeed, throughout the whole country, for poor Jack; and a great deal of well-deserved abuse showered upon the law that punishes a man for protecting his wife and property from the attacks of ruffianly house-breakers.

But murmur, petition and agitate as his friends might and most assuredly did the law respecting manslaughter remained unrepaled and in force, and the day of Jack's trial came on fast.

I have omitted to mention that of all the neighbours Mr. Clifford, the gentleman who had been indirectly the cause of Jack's trouble, had alone refused to take any part in the agitating and petitioning.

Indeed, when remonstrated with upon his apathy and unfeeling indifference he had requested the remonstrator to mind his own business and kindly allow him to go on his way in peace.

At last the day came.

The court was crowded from floor to ceiling; the only individuals not enthusiastically and favourably impressed by the prisoner being the judge and the lawyers for the Crown.

As much of Colme and Nookham as could be squeezed in was in the court, excepting Mr. Clifford, who though subpoenaed as a witness for the defence, had managed to slip out of the way at the last moment.

All rose as the judge entered, and a number repeated the compliment for the benefit of the prisoner, poor Jack, who looked rather pale but smiled sorrowfully around him as he passed into the dock; he stooped down to press his wife's hand and whisper a word of encouragement, that went far to keep her up and heighten the enthusiasm of their friends.

For ten long hours witnesses proved this and counsel argued that, and the judge summed up all together; it was a most sad and pitiable case, but with all it was felt that the judge's address was adverse to Jack.

The jury withdrew, and the terrible hum of suppressed and overpowering excitement rose and filled the court.

What would be their verdict?

In half an hour's time the twelve honest men reappeared.

The judge entered the scarlet throne. The prisoner was brought back to the dock.

A silence was needlessly proclaimed, for each man was as still as death.

Then, when all eyes were bent upon the white

faces of the two young people, the foreman rose and delivered the verdict:

"Justifiable homicide."

Such a roar of triumphant delight was surely never heard in a court of justice before or since.

Someone declared that the judge smiled with relief, but that could not possibly have been.

Anyhow Jack was acquitted, and he and Clara borne home in a carriage drawn by a score of the Colme and Nookham gentlemen.

A public dinner was announced, and a public testimonial set on foot to mark their sympathy for his undeserved sufferings.

Then the two, husband and wife, were left side by side in their cosy little drawing-room to thank Heaven and weep over their escape.

Scarcely yet, however, for while they were still talking over the dreadful trial and the many kind friends it had produced, Mary opened the door and announced:

"Mr. Clifford."

That gentleman, unaffected by Clara's flush of indignation, seized Jack's hand, and wringing it with the greatest warmth, burst into a hearty peal of laughter.

Jack looked indignant, but Mr. Clifford hastened to explain.

"You all thought me a hard-hearted sort of fellow, I know; but I didn't mind," said he.

"I'd got my work to do and I did it. For see, I blamed myself for letting you have the revolver. I said, 'if I hadn't forced it upon him the ruffian wouldn't have been winged'; so I set to work. I didn't go in for petitioning Parliament and badgering the Home Secretary; that was all no use, I knew. Oh, I managed it, though, I managed it while all the rest of them were bullying me for an unfeeling wretch."

"But how?" ventured to ask Jack, while Clara wept with a heart too full to bear any further mystification.

Mr. Clifford wiped his brow.

"You remember Morris? Perhaps you did not notice him in the box? I daresay not. Well, he was there, and a rare job I had to get him there. First, we had to take a house within the district, then we had to humbug the assize clerk, then—oh, never mind, we managed to get him on the panel. The thing was pretty well done then, and I'd have dropped you a line but I was afraid to. You see, if there had been the slightest suspicion the jury would have been challenged, and then it would all have been thrown over. Morris went into the box with the fixed determination to hold out for twenty years before he'd send the man for penal servitude for shooting the fellow who had nearly killed him.

"Oh, Morris was warm upon it, I assure you, Mrs. Hinton—I wish you wouldn't cry so, ma'am—why he took off his coat in the jury-room and showed the other eleven the bruises the burglars had made upon his chest.

"'There, gentlemen,' said he, 'look at that! Some of your turns will come some fine night, then you'll wish Mr. Hinton had shot half a dozen of the wretches instead of one!'

"That settled them, they all went for Morris's verdict—'Justifiable Homicide,' and here you are."

It only remains for me to say that Jack has never been troubled with any further romance, and that he has painted his baby-picture from a model which peculiarly belongs to him.

P. W.

FACETIÆ.

CONVERSATIONS FOR THE TIMES.

FIRST LADY: "Do you see that Bismarck has had one of those delightful telephones put up in his office?"

FIRST GENT: "Ya-as. Talks to Lord Dahby through it, I believe. Awful fun. Shall have a telephone myself. Saves a fellow going out to call on other fellows. Can talk to 'em through telephones, you know."

SECOND LADY: "Oh, and has Lord Derby one in his office? I shall ask my husband to get up

a pic-nic there, he knows all the heads, and then we can have such fun with the telephone. Let us all go at once."

They go and pic-nic at the Foreign Office.

FIRST LADY (through telephone): "Count Bismarck!"

BISMARCK (in Berlin, through telephone): "Was ist's?"

FIRST LADY: "You're an old dear."

BISMARCK (in English): "Derby, don't be a fool!"

FIRST LADY: "Oh, Bissy, now you're rude. How are bonnets worn in Berlin now?"

GERMAN OFFICIAL (through telephone): "Count Bismarck has gone to the War Office to declare war against England. He says he has been grossly insulted through his telephone."

SECOND GENT: "Let's have a lark with MacMahon now. (Through telephone to Paris.) De Broglie!"

DE BROGLIE: "Is that you, Lord Derby? What is it?"

SECOND GENT: "Is the Marshal there?"

DE BROGLIE: "Yes, in the room with me."

SECOND GENT: "Ask him when he's going to be a good boy and eat that pie."

SECOND LADY: "And oh, do ask him if the duchess wears front curls now."

DE BROGLIE: "'Cre nom de Dieu! Mille Tonnerres! Nothing but blood can avenge this insult. Lord Derby, I will box you on the nose."

PIC-NIC PARTY: "Oh, hadn't we better run away quick."

They run away.

DERBY (next morning): "What's this in the 'Times'? 'In consequence of the gross personalities exchanged between Lord Derby and the ministers of Germany and France through the telephone, the ambassadors at the Court of St. James's have demanded their papers.' Good gracious! What does it all mean?" —Fun.

A CHICORELLEARY ONE.

SOMEONE writes to the papers to discuss the question of coffee palaces, and suggests that these places should have grounds attached to them for the summer. London coffee must have changed very much if there are not plenty of grounds to all these concerns. —Fun.

ST. ANDREW'S DAY IN LONDON.

(By a Member of the Scotch Statistical Society.)

84,936 Scotchmen said "Slainthe."

64,000 Scotchmen did not know what the word meant.

3,211 Scotchmen assumed the kilt.

3,009 Scotchmen assuming that garment had no right to it.

2 Scotchmen were aware that the existing clan-tartans are neither ancient nor Gaelic, but the invention of an Edinburgh tailor during the last century.

1,000,000 versions of "Auld Lang Syne" were sung.

800 haggises were eaten by Scotchmen to the dainty born.

4,002 Saxons shut up in the attempt to follow their example.

72,000 bottles of "Mountain Dew" were drunk.

80,000 Scotchmen were ditto. —Punch.

"WAITER," he yelled with an awful roar. "This napkin, I'm sure, has been used before."

"By four, sir, no," did the waiter say. "You're only the third one that's used it to-day."

ATTRACTING THE PUBLIC EYE.

JIM BROWN, a worthy German, died in Franklin, Pa., recently, and his next friend, also a worthy German, was appointed administrator to settle up the affairs of his estate.

The administrator called at a printing office the other day to have posters printed announcing that the goods of the late Brown would be sold at public auction.

"I want you to write up dose bills in some kind of shyle," said the administrator, whose mind runs much to business; "I want somding dot vill addract der buptic eye, und pring in der beoples from der goundry."

The printer asked for a suggestion or two.

"Mrs. Brown und mineself haf dalked it ofer," continued the business man, "und ve vant you to headd dose bills soundings dis vay," and he marked on the wall with his cane to show that he wanted in big letters:

"Hooraw! hooraw! Jim Brown is dead!"

EXPLAINING A DIFFICULT PROBLEM.

A NEGRO was convicted in Court the other day for hitting another negro with an axe. A party of coloured savans were discussing the case in old Si's presence.

"What I wants to kno," said one of them, "is jiss diss: How ken a man hit anudder man wid de eye ob der ax?"

"Why kant he—tell me dat?" said old Si.

"Kase hit stands ter reezen, don't yer see—for de eye ob der ax is whar de handel goes in, an' how is er man gwine ter 'sault anudder man wid er contempt to murder by hittin' him on de hed wid er hole?"

This was a clincher, the other darkies thought, but old Si remarked:

"Fore de wah me an' you used to work in de same yard, didn't we?"

"Yes, we did."

"Well, I s'pose you members when Massa Threlkill, down der at Griffin, used ter lan' yer 'bout fohby wid dat paddle dat he had?"

"Oh, you go 'way!"

"Well, dis are de pint: When he used fer ter paddle yer, an' yer used fer ter grone 'round an' complain ob der blisters what he raised on yer, wuz hit de paddle or de holes in de paddle what raised de skin an' made de sore? Now whar's yet scientific argyment?"

The case was settled—nobody in the negative.

AN UNHEALTHY CLIMATE FOR THE FORCE.

AN individual named John Climate has been effectually "quodded" for assaulting policemen. While he was committing the offence for which he suffers he was probably a hot Climate; but having had time to cool down, he is now a cold Climate enough in gaol. Ought not some one to have something to say to the Wolverhampton constabulary for causing these changes of Climate?

Funny Folks.

THE PRICE OF GIN.

HE was a parson, and he travelled down to Bunsborough with a commercial traveller. This latter was a decentish sort of fellow, and white tie was struck by him, and asked whether he might dine with him in the commercial room.

Assent was granted and the dinner came off. The reverend's curiosity grew excited, and he inquired of his neighbours what their business might be.

"Mine's fancy goods," said one.

"Mine's timber," said another.

"Mine's linen," said a third.

And then the questioner was asked in what line he was travelling.

"In the spiritual," was the response.

"In the spiritual?" said the asker; "then how do you account for the deuce of a price you've sent gin up to?"

MATRIMONIAL SCENE.

"CAN you let me have some money this morning, to purchase a new bonnet, my dear?"

"By-and-bye, love."

"That's what you always say, my love; but how can I buy and buy without money?"

And that brought the money, just as one good turn deserves another.

Her wit was so successful that she tried again the next week.

"I want money, my dear, to buy a new dress."

"Well, you can't have it. You called me a bear last night," said her husband.

"Oh, well, dear, you know that it was only because you are fond of—hugging."

It hit him just right again, and she got the money and something extra. He left his pretty wife and hurried off to business, saying:

"It takes a fortune to keep such a wife as you are—but it's worth it."

A MAN whose knowledge is based on actual

experience tells us—and it is worthy of trial—that when calling on our sweethearts (as some of us are wont to do), we should carry affection in our hearts, perfection in our manners, and confection in our pockets.

STATISTICS.

IMPORTS.—The importation of wheat has considerably increased this year. In the last ten months the value was £26,834,999, against £19,597,918 in the same period of the preceding year. From Russia the value was £5,605,989, and last year, £3,261,708. During the present year cured and salted fish of the declared value of £987,418 was imported, against £827,899 in the preceding year. There has been a large increase in the importation of meat "preserved otherwise than by salting" this year. The declared value in the last ten months was £1,187,872, against £648,303 in the previous year. The value of petroleum imported this year increased to £1,416,770, against £1,046,391 last year. This year, to the 31st ult., the value of elephants' teeth imported was £485,439, and last year £476,241.

LINES TO AN ABSENT WIFE.

Though tossed upon life's stormy sea,
Where counter currents run,
My fond heart ever turns to thee,
As blossoms to the sun.

Heart of my heart, soul of my soul,
Wherever I may be,
True as the magnet to the pole
Is my fond heart to thee.

Fortune and fame are trifling things
Without thy smile, sweet wife;
Mere summer birds, with fickle wings,
That fly when storms are rife.

A cup of water and a crust,
Within an humble cot,
I prize above the gilded dust
In courts where thou art not.

Though we have lived in sun and cloud,
We have less cloud than sun:
'Twas very dark when the draped shroud
Covered our dearest one.

Dearest because afflicted long,
He won our tender love;
Now he has joined the happy throng,
And skies are bright above.

I think of thee, when sad with care,
And Hope withholds her smile;
I know that Heaven will hear thy prayer,
From lips that know no guile.

When at the cross I bow the knee,
And ask to be forgiven,
Oh, then, dear wife, I think of thee,
So like the souls in Heaven. G. W. B.

GEMS.

Be always at leisure to do good; never make business an excuse to decline offices of humanity. He who is puffed up with the first gale of prosperity will bend beneath the first blast of adversity.

We ought never to believe ill of anyone till we are certain of it. We ought not to say anything that is rude and displeasing even in joke; and even then we ought not to carry the joke too far.

Nothing can be more absurd, than "looking guilty" proves guilt. An honest man charged with crime is much more likely to blush at the

accusation than the real offender, who is generally prepared for the event, and has his face "ready made." The very thought of his being suspected of anything criminal will bring the blood to an innocent man's cheek nine times out of ten.

Those real gems of thought that shine like stars in the night were not struck out at a heat, as sparks from a blacksmith's anvil are, but fashioned and polished with a patient and a weary and an aching head and heart.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

TO CAN PINEAPPLES.—Pare, and cut in small pieces, taking out the core (or centre), then fill the jars with the fruit; to each quart jar dissolve a teacupful of white sugar in a teacupful of boiling water, and pour in on the fruit, which should fill the jar; then put the jars in a boiler of cold water (putting a nail under each jar, so as not to crack the glass), in which they should stand with the water one-third from the tops of the jars; boil twenty minutes, and seal quickly. This is also an excellent receipt for canning peaches, Bartlett pears, and cherries.

TO WASH RED FLANNEL.—Make warm suds; use very little soap (it hardens the flannel); add a teaspoonful of pulverised borax to every pail of water; rub on the board, or, if possible, only with the hands; rinse in one plain warm water; wring or press dry; shake well before hanging in a shady place to dry.

MUSHROOM CATSUP.—Place agarics of as large a size as you can procure (not worm eaten), layer by layer in a deep pan, sprinkling each layer as it is put in with a little salt; the next day stir them up several times so as to mash and extract their juice. On the third day strain off the liquor, measure, and boil for ten minutes, and then to every pint bottle of the liquor add half ounce of black pepper, quarter ounce of bruised ginger root, a blade of mace, a clove or two, and a teaspoonful of mustard seed; boil again for half an hour, put in two or three bay leaves, and set aside until quite cold; pass through a strainer and bottle, cork well, and dip the ends in resin. A very little Chili vinegar is an improvement, and some add a glass of port wine or a glass of strong ale in every bottle. Care should be taken that the spice is not added so abundantly as to overpower the true flavour of the mushrooms.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE "agony column" of the "Times" will no longer be open to disconsolate lovers, as it has been found to be the cause of much mischief.

A VERY extraordinary influx of fashionable life is observable in the metropolis; there is always a sort of second season just prior to Christmas, but it has begun early this year. Certainly there have been and are some interesting doings in the metropolis, which may partially account for this spurt of life.

A NEW rifle has been adopted at the War Office. It is made on the Martini-Henry principle, but differs slightly from the previous pattern. The new arm will be less likely to discharge accidentally than the rifle hitherto in use in the British army.

FRANCE has green oysters, the most esteemed also, which come from Marennes; she has first supplied red oysters from Arcachon, the fish is fat and savoury, but people became squeamish about the colour. It was perhaps "latent, radicalism" at last made manifest; it was resolved to hold an oyster congress, so the wisest chemists in Paris were summoned to Bordeaux. They reported that the result was owing to the enclosed beds having been subject to an evaporation since two months, and no fresh water stream having traversed them during that period, the iodine contained in the sea-water had increased inordinately, thus "dying" the bivalve, which is also a voracious feeder. Already "iodine oysters," as white as snow, from Ostend, are advertised.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

T. W.—I. Pimples are of different kinds and arise from various causes. If yours are very troublesome you should consult a medical man. Speaking generally, a remedy for them is to be found in the use of mild saline aperients, wormwood tea, frequent ablation with warm water—or sea-bathing when seasonable—and the avoidance of every kind of stimulant, with the occasional employment of a lotion made from lemon-juice or distilled vinegar and water mixed with a little glycerine. 2. Writing very good.

NORRY.—Dyspepsia is probably the cause of the redness. Observe moderation, deliberation and regularity of living. Take plenty of open-air exercise and strengthen the digestive powers by the use, when felt needful, of mild bitters, tonics and stimulants.

W. P.'s writing is quite good enough for office work. We do not know what receipt our correspondent means for cleaning gloves, and the treatment varies according to the material of which they are made.

GEORGE R.—Refer to an almanack, the nearest you can get to the required date, and work out the day for yourself. We have no time usually to spend in useless calculations.

ALISON TRENT.—1. Your first question does not require an answer. 2. To make dubbin take of black resin 2lbs., tallow 1lb., and crude cod oil, or train oil, 1 gallon; then boil to a proper consistence. 3. Emma, a nurse; Emily, winning; Daniel, God is judge. 4. Yes, so far as English law is concerned, but if any sacerdotal obligation were likely to be raised the marriage might be celebrated first according to the Roman Catholic rite. 5. A CORRESPONDENT'S writing is very passable, but of course might be improved by careful practice. Orthography quite correct.

INQUIRER.—1. A part of the site of the modern Constantinople was Byzantium. A band of Megarian colonists were the original settlers about the middle of the 7th century B.C. It subsequently became a Greek city and possessed great commercial importance—its harbour being called the Golden Horn in consequence thereof. After many vicissitudes it came under the Roman power, and the Emperor Constantine built a new city and made it the capital of the Roman Empire in A.D. 330—hence Constantinople—Istanbul in Turkish (Stamboul). When the division of the Roman Empire took place in 395 it formed the capital of the eastern or Byzantine Empire. But in 1453 it was stormed by the Turks, and since that time it has remained in their possession. Under Sultan Mahomed the Fourth the Turks waged a successful war against Poland about the middle of the 17th century, and later on, in 1683, the capital of Austria was invested by him with 200,000 men, but the Turks, instead of taking possession of Vienna, were disastrously defeated in that campaign. We cannot spare space to enter into further details. 2. Writing very scribbly.

MISS ROSE.—A marriage licence must be procured from Doctor's Commons. The cost is about £3 10s. One of the contracting parties must have resided for three weeks previous to the ceremony being solemnised in the district to which the church selected belongs. But bans have to be proclaimed for three Sundays in succession in two churches if the betrothed couple live in different parishes. The expense is trifling.

W. F. T.—There are many ways of making ink. The principal ingredients are galls, gums, vitriol, and rain-water. An excellent ink suitable for writing with steel pens, which it does not corrode, may be manufactured as follows: Sixty grains of caustic soda, a pint of water, and as much Indian ink as is required for producing a proper blackness.

R. T., eighteen, tall, dark hair, brown eyes, would like to correspond with a young lady about seventeen with a view to matrimony.

M. O., twenty-one, curly hair, blue eyes, tall, would like to correspond with a young man with a view to matrimony. Respondent must be twenty-four, tall, dark, of a loving disposition.

DANIEL, twenty-five, medium height, fair, and of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a young lady. Must be about twenty, brown hair and eyes, fair, good-looking.

JACK D., twenty-six, good-looking, light hair, tall, hazel eyes, wishes to correspond with a young lady. Must be twenty-three, thoroughly domesticated, good-looking, brown hair and eyes.

HELEN and LIZIE, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen. Helen is twenty-two, medium height, light brown hair, blue eyes. Lizie is twenty, tall, light brown hair, blue eyes, fond of home and music.

SKY BLUE, a seaman in the Royal Navy, twenty-two, medium height, dark, hazel eyes, would like to correspond with a lady about twenty.

JAMES and LLOYD, two friends, would like to exchange carte-de-visite with two young ladies with a view to matrimony. James is twenty-one, tall, fair, good-looking. Lloyd is nineteen, tall, dark. Respondents must be about eighteen.

MARIAN and AMY wish to correspond with two young men. Marian is seventeen, medium height, dark eyes, good-looking. Amy is sixteen, fair, of a loving disposition.

CARRY, twenty-five, dark hair and eyes, medium height, considered good-looking, would like to correspond with a young man about thirty, fair, good-looking, and fond of home.

HARRY and BILL would like to correspond with two young ladies. Harry is twenty-one, tall, fond of home and children. Bill is twenty-two, medium height, dark, loving.

LOTTIE and PRIMROSE, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen. Lottie is twenty, tall, dark. Primrose is eighteen, fair. Respondents must be between twenty-one and twenty-five.

ALF and BOB, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies. Alf is twenty, tall, light brown hair and eyes, fair, fond of home. Bob is twenty-two, medium height, dark brown hair and eyes, thoroughly domesticated.

TRUE BLUE, SHEET ANCHOR-JACK, and SCRAM BAG, three seamen in the Royal Navy, wish to correspond with three young ladies. True Blue is twenty, dark brown hair, hazel eyes, fond of home. Sheet-Anchor Jack is twenty-one, tall, fond of home and children. Scram Bag is twenty-three, tall, light brown hair, considered good-looking.

OXYGEN, twenty-one, fair, medium height, would like to correspond with a young lady about nineteen with a view to matrimony.

WHAT SHE TOLD ME AT THE GATE.

'Tis every night at sunset
I wander forth to meet
The fairy little damsel
Who comes with smiles to greet;
Her face is like the sunshine
Her beauty is my fate;
For she always looks so charming
When she meets me at the gate.

She meets me, she greets me,
She is my bonnie Sue;
And what she told me at the gate,
Ah! don't you wish you knew?

And if you hear I'm married,
And settle down in life,
You'll know I have no other
Than Susie for my wife.
Last night she promised something
I must not here relate,
For, oh! I cannot tell you
What she told me at the gate.

She meets me, she greets me,
She is my bonnie Sue;
But what she told me at the gate,
Was—don't you wish you knew?

B. D. S.

M. E. D., twenty-five, tall, dark, of a loving disposition, wishes to correspond with a young gentleman with a view to matrimony. Respondent must be fond of home and children.

LOUISA, twenty-one, tall, dark hair and eyes, would like to correspond with a young gentleman about the same age, fond of home.

ANNIE, a widow, wishes to correspond with a gentleman about forty-five. Must be fond of home, of a loving disposition.

LOO, eighteen, would like to correspond with a young gentleman about twenty.

VISCOUNT, a sailor in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with a young lady with a view to matrimony. He is twenty-four, dark, fond of home and children. Must be about twenty-one, fond of home and music, thoroughly domesticated.

BESSIE, MABEL, and EMILY wish to correspond with three young gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Bessie is twenty. Mabel is seventeen, brown hair, good-looking. Emily is sixteen, handsome. Respondents must be about twenty-three, tall, fond of home, good-looking, loving.

ALBERT and HARRY, two seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with two young ladies about nineteen. Albert is twenty, medium height, dark hair, hazel eyes. Harry is twenty-three, hazel eyes, medium height.

ANNIE, seventeen, fair, dark blue eyes, fond of home, would like to correspond with a young man about sixteen.

J. A. W., twenty-two, fair, tall, good-looking, would like to correspond with a young lady of a loving disposition, thoroughly domesticated.

FAVONIUS, twenty-three, medium height, good-tempered, would like to correspond with a young lady about nineteen.

KATE and ADA, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen. Kate is eighteen. Ada is seventeen. Respondents must be about nineteen, and loving.

MARIE and MAGGIE H., two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen. Marie is domesticated, fond of home and children. Maggie H. is domesticated, good-looking.

LAURA, EMILY, and MAGGIE, three friends, would like to correspond with three young men with a view to matrimony. Laura is twenty, tall, dark. Emily is nineteen, medium height. Maggie is twenty, medium height, fair, fond of home.

C. W. and L. W., two seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with two young women with a view to matrimony. C. W. is twenty-four, brown hair, blue eyes, good-looking. L. W. is twenty-one, auburn hair, hazel eyes, good-looking, of a loving disposition. Respondents must be about the same age, tall, dark, good-tempered.

ROSE and SUE, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Rose is nineteen, medium height, brown hair, blue eyes. Sue is twenty, tall, brown hair, dark. Both are domesticated.

JANE and LYDIA, two friends, would like to correspond with two gentlemen. Jane is eighteen, fair, of a loving disposition. Lydia is seventeen, light hair, considered good-looking.

B. C. W., a seaman in the Royal Navy, medium height, dark, of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a young lady.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

HARRY H. is responded to by—Violet S., eighteen, tall, dark.

FRED M. by—Evelyn L., eighteen, tall, fair, and good-looking.

LOVELY ANNIE by—Sheet-Anchor Jack, twenty-two, dark hair, blue eyes.

ALFRED H. by—Annie Z. Y., twenty-one, tall, and dark.

HARRY by—Rose Z. C., nineteen, tall, fair, and domesticated.

LOVELY ANNIE by—A. G. G., twenty-three, medium height, brown hair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of home.

CHARLIE by—Maud, eighteen, dark hair and eyes.

JOSEPH by—Lillian, twenty, light hair and eyes.

DAISY by—Frank C., twenty-five, medium height, brown hair, blue eyes.

EMILY by—Delta, tall, dark, and of a loving disposition.

MARTHA by—C. C., nineteen, dark hair, blue eyes, fond of home.

LIZIE by—Charles B., twenty-two, medium height, good-tempered.

EMILY by—T. D. T., eighteen, dark, blue eyes, fond of home.

KATE by—J. H. B., nineteen, auburn hair, blue eyes, quiet.

WILLIE by—Maud H.

BERTY B. by—B. E. A., nineteen, medium height, fair, of a loving disposition.

JOSEPHINE W. by—Gaff Topall Jack, twenty-four, medium height, dark hair, blue eyes, fond of home and music.

POLLY by—Jack Shepherd, twenty-one, dark hair, blue eyes, fair.

ALICE by—Blue Skin, nineteen, medium height, good-looking, dark hair, hazel eyes, fair, fond of home and children.

J. G. W. by—E., brown hair, hazel eyes, of a loving disposition.

K. W. by—Annie Laurie, twenty-four, of a loving disposition.

OSCAR WAVE by—J. T., good-looking, fond of home and children.

LOTTIE by—M. D., eighteen, brown hair and eyes, fair, good-tempered.

EDWARD S. by—Marian, sixteen, medium height, and tall.

LILLIAN by—T. K., eighteen, golden hair, dark eyes, and fair.

G. A. J. by—Emilie, seventeen, brown hair, blue eyes, medium height.

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London: Published for the Proprietors at 334, Strand, by A. SMITH & CO.